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DEAR FELLOW CRIMSON TIDE FANS,

Recently I heard a joke about an editor, a National Public Radio interviewer telling the joke to an editor she was interviewing. It's not the first time I've heard that joke. It's not flattering to an editor, and not really all that funny. It is the only "editor" joke I've ever heard.

Unlike, say, lawyers. There are jokes about everyone from astronauts to zoologists, but probably more about attorneys than just about any profession. One that's told somewhat regularly is that 99 per cent of trial lawyers give the rest a bad name.

I thought about that because of another story I've heard. As of this writing there has been no official announcement, but I don't think there is going to be a Fan Day at Alabama this year. That's too bad, but certainly understandable.

I believe it was Ray Perkins who came up with the idea, since copied by just about everyone. Perkins had a lot of good ideas when he was head football coach and athletics director at Alabama in the 1980s. The Fan Day idea was to have the players available for autographs and photographs, and it was really for young people.

But the opportunity was too much for the greedy. Autographed items are business these days, fodder for sales, particularly internet sales.

As a result, Coleman Coliseum was clogged by long lines of those with multiple items to be autographed. Parents with young children couldn't get close to the heroes.

Fan Day has become unmanageable.

Those involved in college athletics hardly can criticize commerce. College football, particularly, is big business at Alabama. It has to be if the school is also going to have baseball and softball and women's basketball and gymnastics and golf and tennis and track and field and all the other sports that are not able to come close to sustaining themselves. Other than football, only men's basketball pulls its own weight.

At most schools, even football isn't enough to make college athletics a break even proposition. Alabama is one of a handful of schools where the athletics department has never taken from the school or the taxpayers. Ticket buyers and donors and sponsors and licensed products are the components of the marketing plan that runs the multimillion dollar Alabama athletics machine. Being a part of the Southeastern Conference is a huge help with lucrative television contracts and bowl shares.

One casualty of the big business of college football has been many of the marquee intersectional games. A savvy athletics director isn't likely to schedule away the millions of dollars that come with a home game against a mid-major (or lower) opponent in order for a home-and-home among equals. Don't look for Alabama to be making any 10-year arrangement with Penn State.

This season a couple of Alabama graduates who are athletics directors at two of the top sports schools in America got together and came up with a plan for a big game without the penalty of having a visiting team. Alabama's Mal Moore and Florida State's Dave Hart arranged for a "neutral" site, Jacksonville, Florida, to host a game in ALLTEL Stadium on September 29. Each team gets 33,000 tickets to satisfy fans (as much as possible), television networks are still dickering for the rights to carry the game, and both schools will make a few million.

It can't happen often, but it's nice that it will happen for Bama this year.

So did you hear the one about the two Auburn guys who walked into a bar? You'd have thought the second one would have ducked.

Sincerely,
Kirk McNair

'Bama, inside the crimson tide magazine is published monthly, 10 times a year (August–May) by Scout Publishing, LLC 1916 Pike Place, Suite 12-250, Seattle, WA 98101-1097. Basic subscription rate is \$44.95. Single copy price is \$4.95. SUBSCRIBERS: If the post office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligations unless we receive a corrected address. POSTMASTER: Please send all change of address forms to: Scout Publishing, LLC 1916 Pike Place, Suite 12-250, Seattle, WA 98101-1097. Please allow three weeks for change of address. Reproduction or use, in whole or in part, of editorial or graphic content in any manner is strictly prohibited without the prior express written permission of Scout Publishing. All letters to 'Bama magazine will be treated as intended for publication and are subject to 'Bama magazine's unrestricted right to edit. Publisher is not responsible for any unsolicited art, photographs or manuscripts. 'Bama magazine is an independent source of news and features relating to Alabama athletic programs. Scout Publishing, 'Bama magazine and their officers, directors and stockholders are not authorized, sponsored or sanctioned by any university, athletic conference, or athletic governing body or any of their agencies. © 2007 Scout Publishing, LLC and 'Bama, inside the crimson tide magazine. All rights reserved.

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Spring 2007 • Volume 29 • Issue Nine

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*Cover photo of Antoine Caldwell and John Parker Wilson by Kent Gidley
Centerspread photo of Kent Matthes by Kent Gidley*

Vol. 29, Issue 9 (ISSN 0195-0975 USPS 489-470) Spring, 2007

'BAMA, INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE magazine is published monthly, 10 times a year (September-June) by Scout Publishing, LLC 2003 Western Ave, Suite 700, Seattle, WA 98121. Basic subscription rate is \$44.95. Single copy price is \$4.95. SUBSCRIBERS: If the post office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligations unless we receive a corrected address. POSTMASTER: Please send all change of address forms to: 'Bama, Inside the Crimson Tide 1916 Pike Place, Suite 12-250, Seattle, WA 98101-1097. Periodicals postage paid at Seattle, WA and additional mailing offices. Please allow three weeks for change of address. Reproduction or use, in whole or in part, of editorial or graphic content in any manner is strictly prohibited without the prior express written permission of Scout Publishing. All letters to 'BAMA magazine will be treated as intended for publication and are subject to 'BAMA magazine's unrestricted right to edit. Publisher is not responsible for any unsolicited art, photographs or manuscripts. 'BAMA magazine is an independent source of news and features relating to Alabama athletic programs. Scout Publishing, 'BAMA magazine and their officers, directors and stockholders are not authorized, sponsored or sanctioned by any university, athletic conference, or athletic governing body or any of their agencies. © 2007 Scout Publishing, LLC and 'BAMA, INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE magazine. All rights reserved.

THE FIRST SPRING

Nick Saban on the building process

New Alabama Football Coach Nick Saban isn't trying to emulate legendary Crimson Tide Coach Paul Bryant, at least not symbolically. Bryant spent most practice time watching from his famous tower, which still stands over Bama practice fields. Saban, like all modern coaches, is on the field.

That doesn't mean Saban doesn't have some of the same characteristics of Bryant.

"I coach the (assistant) coaches a lot," Saban said as his team prepared for spring practice, which was to wind up with the April 21 A-Day game. He also said, "I coach all the players. I'm involved with everything we do."

But if you're looking for Saban during practice, the chances for success are a lot better if you check where the defense is working.

"Philosophically, I'm more involved with the defense than the offense, only because that's my experience and my expertise," Saban said.

All good football coaches enjoy the hands-on experience of working with players, and Saban is no exception. He said, "Sometimes I work with the corners in individual drills and enjoy that."

But he's not trying to beat the offense. He's working to help the offense as much as the defense.

Saban said, "Because I've always been a pass coverage guy, I try to make a contribution offensively as to how they play against coverages. I want our coaches and players to understand it and how we can design a little more effective way to attack it."

Alabama's head coach has a self-imposed limit on how far he takes his offensive leadership. It is a bit of a surprise that he is not more involved in the offense, particularly since he was a quarterback who called his own plays. "I probably could do it," he said.

But, he said, he doesn't go beyond the philosophical installation. "I've never tried to get outside that where you're messing people up," he said. "Probably the kiss of death for a defensive coach is to want to call the offensive



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plays. Most defensive guys want to call offensive plays. You hire someone who can do that, so why do you want to mess them up? I want to help establish the philosophy and the system we want to run and make sure that the philosophy and system are reflective of what I want it to be. And I help them implement it the best I can. But I let them do it.

"It's the same on defense, it's just always been my system. So I have to help them a little more at the beginning putting it in and especially when you have new guys."

Buddy Ryan was a legendary National Football League defensive coordinator, particularly when he was with the Chicago Bears. Saban got to know Ryan when Saban was defensive coordinator at Michigan State. "I used to go visit them all the time, go to their camps," Saban said. "I got to know him and I had a lot of respect for him."

Later Saban was defensive coordinator of the Cleveland Browns and Ryan had become head coach of the Arizona Cardinals. The teams played late in the year as Ryan's career was winding down and Saban had a chance to visit with Ryan.

"I asked him about difference in being head coach and being defensive coordinator, because he was best defensive coordinator of that era," Saban said. "He said, 'When I'm the head coach, I lose my best assistant.' I asked him what he meant. He said, 'I was always somebody's best assistant. When I become the head coach, I'm not that person anymore.' He told me he would be better off staying more involved with what he was good at rather than trying to do everything.

"I don't take it to that degree," Saban said. "I'm not the defensive coordinator. We have a defensive coordinator."

A new coaching staff presents special circumstances for Alabama's spring football practice.

Saban said, "Anytime you have new systems – offense, defense special teams – new terminology, new basically everything, it's challenging for the teacher and it's challenging for the person who is trying to learn it. And that's what we're having to go through this spring. We're pleased with the progress we've made, but we've got a long way to go."

He said that in some ways, though, this spring practice is the same as it will be in the future.

Saban said, "The general goals of what you want to accomplish in the springs are the same. You always want to do a good job of coaching fundamentals and getting the intangible things relative to competition established – effort, toughness, being responsible to know your job – those kinds of things. But you want to do a good job of teaching fundamental football techniques, whether it's blocking, tackling, pass block protection, whatever."

"Then the second goal is that everyone comes out of the spring with a good knowledge and understanding and confidence about the system – offense, defense and special teams – relative to how it pertains to him at his position. And the greater number of guys who have that, obviously it is going to benefit you."

"The third thing, the last goal, is you are able to expose your team to some degree to something different they might see in the fall relative to some opponent. That may be a little difficult to do this spring. That's where this spring is different."

A college football team with a new head coach (and, usually, new coaching staff) has a disadvantage in preparation. Saban, who came to Bama from the Miami Dolphins, noted, "In the NFL when you are a new staff you get an extra minicamp so you get a few extra practices. In college you don't get anything."

"What's different about this spring is the starting point of the players," Saban said. "When you have an established program, your players have been through the same system two or three or four years. Even freshmen have been through a fall. So the learning curve for players in an established program is different than it is for our entire team."

That means the team "has to do a good job in the initial job of fundamentals and grasping systems," Saban said. "You might have to take things a little bit slower."

Saban has been gratified that Bama players have been willing to learn. "Players can't put self-imposed limitations on what they can learn," Saban said. "Sometimes people resist learning something new. I haven't seen that in our players. That can be a factor when players resist. It helps when guys who have some experience are flexible."

Saban made it clear from the beginning that everyone was starting over. "We have a criteria in what we look for in players at every position," he said. "It's a work in progress. You let players compete and let the cream rise to the top. I don't want to look at last year's game tape and say 'This guy can play, this guy can't, this guy can do this,' and so forth. You do a little of that not in terms of evaluation, but only in terms of familiarizing yourself

with the guy's strengths and weaknesses and how he might fit into the criteria you want for a particular position. We've given every player an opportunity to have a clean slate. We want every guy to compete to try to master the fundamentals and the system. That will contribute to his ability to execute, and our ability to execute as a group is going to determine to large degree what kind of success we can have."

2007 Alabama Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site	Series Record
September 1	Western Carolina	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 1-0-0
September 8	Vanderbilt	Nashville	UofA leads 57-19-4
September 15	Arkansas	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 10-7-0
September 22	Georgia	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 35-24-4
September 29	Florida State	Jacksonville	UofA leads 2-0-1
October 6	Houston	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 9-0-0
October 13	Mississippi	Oxford	UofA leads 43-9-2
October 20	Tennessee	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 44-38-7
October 27	Open		
November 3	LSU	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 43-22-5
November 10	Mississippi State	Starkville	UofA leads 72-16-3
November 17	Louisiana-Monroe	Tuscaloosa	First meeting
November 24	Auburn	Auburn	UofA leads 38-32-1
December 1	SEC Championship	Atlanta	2 wins, 3 losses

GIVING NEAR AND FAR

At his public introduction as Alabama's new head football coach during the Alabama-LSU basketball game, Nick Saban presented a check for \$100,000 from him and his wife, Terry, to University President Dr. Robert E. Witt.

There was some history involved in that generosity. And there will be more giving from Saban in the future.

"Terry and I have always done that," Saban said. It began at Michigan State, where the Sabans contributed \$50,000 for an academic center to support athletics. He did the same thing at LSU.

"Here we didn't need an academic center," Saban said. "We have an outstanding academic support center in Bryant Hall."

"I wanted to do something in the academic area to help the young people in this state. I asked Dr. Witt the most effective way for us to do that. He made the recommendation for this first generation scholarship. He pointed out that it usually ends up helping families that haven't had opportunities to go to college in the past and that was a program he thought would have the greatest impact to help, so we made that contribution."

Beyond The University, the Sabans are in the process of establishing a Nick's Kids Foundation in Alabama. Various groups will have the opportunity to participate in the foundation, which benefits organizations serving the needs of young people.

Saban makes a living as a football coach. Anyone who has the position of head football coach at Alabama is frequently asked to speak to organizations of every type. The Crimson Tide head coach would not be able to do his job if he accepted all those offers.

Saban will use speaking opportunities to fund Nick's Kids Foundation.

A speaking fee for Saban's appearances will go into the foundation, and at the end of the year the proceeds will be provided to a variety of worthy youth organizations in the state.

Even at that, he's unlikely to be able to accept all offers. And he said that he recognizes his obligations to The University for various campus and alumni activities that will not involve a fee.

Saban said, "I'm not interested in speaking to make money, but I will speak to those who are willing to make the contribution to Nick's Kids Foundation, which will help the children of this state."

Although it is not a Saban charity, the Alabama head coach was also instrumental in the decision of the athletics department to have donor stations at the spring A-Day Game, where fans could make contributions to the City of Enterprise for relief after the devastating tornado that struck there this year. Five students at Enterprise High School were killed in that tragedy. ■

Saban points out that all players are not equal, even those who earn starting jobs or playing time. "Players play for different reasons," he said. "Some guys play because they have great ability and great instincts. Other guys may not have quite as good ability, but have really good instincts. Other guys have good ability but have learning issues and make a lot of mistakes and their dependability becomes suspect. We have to figure that out on the field. It's a work in progress and it can't happen faster than it's going to happen."

"And it's probably going to continue to be a work in progress through the season and subsequent seasons. That's what building is. You start with the foundation and then you build. And if you don't establish a good foundation, you don't have a very good building. If you compromise the foundation to speed up the process of getting the building done, you don't have a very good result."

That foundation began with a five-week off-season program prior to the start of spring practice on March 24.

Saban said the off-season work provided "us all an opportunity to learn about our players, start to develop some relationships with those players, for those players to learn what the expectations are relative to how they go about doing their work--standard of excellence, effort, finishing things, trying to do things the right way so we have the best opportunity to be successful as a group."

"That's something that is learned. It takes time to develop those kinds of habits. Players were willing and made tremendous strides."

"We couldn't get into the technical part of football until spring practice started, but we had very limited meetings with the players without football stuff in the off-season program. That is geared towards improving speed and conditioning and endurance."

Saban said the off-season program was what he calls the Fourth Quarter Program. He lists the aspects, counting off on his fingers: Commitment, Effort, Toughness, Discipline.

And then he raises the thumb. "And that make Pride."

Saban detailed the nuts and bolts of the Fourth Quarter Program.

"We do it with a running program, speed improvement program, agility program, and technique agility, which are things you try to apply to football skills," he said. "And then we do it with simulated training, which is what a football player does at his position. Not

assignments, but just physical movements. I think we made a lot of progress in those areas."

Following spring practice Saban and his staff were to be in Mobile for a coaching clinic. He hit the ground running in that area with an address at the Alabama High School Coaches Association Coaching Clinic and was also scheduled for the coaching clinic at the state

all-star game. He said his assistant coaches frequently consult with high school coaches.

That can be expected to pay dividends when Tide coaches return to those coaches during recruiting. Saban said, "The whole key to it is developing relationships, and when you do something like this you have the opportunity to build relationships." ■

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HE WANTS TO WIN

Simeon Castille was all-star in so-so season

It happened off the cuff. But the events that led to one of the defining moments of Alabama's substandard season of 2006 had been percolating for weeks.

The moment: Alabama's first offensive possession in the Iron Bowl.

The set-up: The Crimson Tide had driven from its own 20, reeling off gains of 12, 14, 27 and 21 yards to reach first-and-goal at the Auburn three-yard line.

The situation: After three runs between the tackles, Alabama faced fourth-and-goal from the one, which seemed to be an excruciating weekly ritual for this Alabama team.

What was happening: Cornerback Simeon Castille looped around his offensive teammates, sprinted on the field up to the space in front of Mike Shula and made it clear where he stood on this fourth-down decision.

Castille, a first-team All-Southeastern Conference selection in 2006, wanted a touchdown and the 93,000-plus fans at Bryant-Denny could tell by the intensity in his face and his body language.

Shula, with a body of questionable fourth-down decisions in his background, kicked the field goal.

Castille was incensed.

"You know, you've got to play football with emotion," Castille says of the incident today. "You want to win."

"I might not have handled it the right way. It happens sometimes; you lose control of your emotions. You just want to win."

Winning football games drives Simeon Castille. Just like it did his father Jeremiah, the All-America cornerback at Alabama from 1979-82, and just like it did his brother Tim, the Tide running back (2003-06) who, ironically, agreed with Shula's field goal decision against Auburn in postgame interviews.

Where Tim Castille was typically composed and analytical, in addition to being straightforward and honest, during his Alabama career, Simeon is more prone to the emotional reaction while also being candid.

Thus, 2006 in a nutshell was maddening



University of Alabama

for one of the nation's premier cornerbacks.

"It was tough," Castille said. "I just want a ring, man. Win. W-I-N."

The hiring of Nick Saban will signal significant change for all areas of the Alabama football team. But perhaps no position will be more impacted than the secondary, Saban's area of specialty, where former Georgia safety Kirby Smart is the position coach.

"I'm real excited with Coach Saban and them working with (Simeon) this year," Jeremiah Castille said. "He'll get the most out of Simeon. He'll go to the next level with this coaching staff next year."

Simeon Castille's level in 2006 wasn't shabby either.

His six interceptions were tied for third in the SEC. His 71 tackles ranked fourth on the Alabama team and were 25 more than the next-highest total by a defensive back.

A highly skilled athlete best known for his speed, ball skills, and hip turn, Castille mixed it up from a physical standpoint as well with plenty of repetitions at the demanding nickel back role in the Joe Kines defense. He took on lead blockers, stuck his nose into the scrums and was a straight-up ballhawk with three fumble recoveries, one forced fumble, six pass

breakups and three quarterback hurries.

The tackle total of 71 was eye-opening for a corner/nickel back.

"Before the season I never thought I'd have as many stops," Castille said late last year. "As a cornerback, first you've got to cover, but everybody thinks corners are finesse. I don't mind taking on blocks or whatever."

"My other years here, shoot, we had some other guys that were making those tackles. That's kind of the role I've had to play, playing that nickel spot, so I enjoy it."

But from an individual statistical standpoint, the interceptions are the thing for Castille. He'll enter his senior season with 10 career picks, officially six behind his father's college total. But bowl statistics were not added to the season stats in Jeremiah's day, and every Alabama fan worth a roll tide knows the elder Castille had a bowl and school record three interceptions in the 1982 Liberty Bowl, the final game coached by the legendary Paul "Bear" Bryant.

In the family interception sweepstakes, Jeremiah Castille set the gold standard the son will shoot for in 2007.

"My dad had 10 interceptions his senior year, so if I do that I'll be doing pretty good," said Simeon, who-by the way-can rattle off the top of his head that Florida's Keiwan Ratliff had nine interceptions in 2003, one of the few challenges to the highly interceptable season of 1982, when Georgia's Terry Hoage had an SEC-record 12 while Jeremiah Castille was grabbing his 10.

Simeon Castille had two interceptions twice in 2006—against Vanderbilt and Tennessee—and added single picks against Arkansas and Oklahoma State. The interception against Oklahoma State came midway through the fourth quarter, just after the Tide scored quick, back-to-back touchdowns on a Javier Arenas punt return and Andre Smith's celebrated tackle-eligible run to tie the Cowboys.

"I was like, 'We're about to score and win this,'" Castille said of that Independence

Bowl pick.

But that was not to be, and Alabama suffered more frustration at the end of a long, difficult season.

Castille, like Tide fans everywhere, hopes the regime change to Saban will produce a quick winner in his senior season.

"I'd love to play in Atlanta for the SEC championship," he said. "If you get to Atlanta, most of the time you'll have a pretty good shot at going to the national championship."

The winter workouts alone under the Saban administration have opened the eyes of the Crimson Tide players.

"Shoot, it's different, but I like it," Castille said.

"(Saban) is big on doing the little things right. I think that's going to help us as a team. It'll help our guys in life, being on top of your stuff and doing what you're supposed to do when you're supposed to do it."

Castille has already paid the price for not doing what he needed academically, as he sat out ineligible for the 2006 Cotton Bowl Classic.

Now his focus is directed toward having a big senior season on a quality team with a strong secondary. Castille thinks the Saban defense, once he gets a grasp on the system, will be productive.

"The difficult part is in trying to learn the new defense," Castille said just before the start of spring drills. "Everything I've learned these last few years is pretty much out the window and we have new terminology."

"It's totally different. Once I learn it though, I think it's going to be a fun defense to play. When I first heard we got (Saban) I was excited because I knew he was hands-on with the secondary."

Though Castille casts an expectant eye forward, he also takes a sentimental view back, particularly on the fate of former Alabama Secondary Coach Chris Ball, whose units ranked high nationally in each of his last three seasons.

Castille forged a bond with Ball and his family and hung out occasionally at their house.

"It hurts to see somebody like that not here anymore and it wasn't what he was doing on the job," Castille said. "It wasn't his performance. But I know that's part of the business."

In the business of covering some of the top receivers in the land, Castille ranks among the nation's best. His list of the most talented receivers he has lined up against begins close to home.

"We have two on our team," he said. "They don't get much better than D.J. (Hall) and they don't get much faster than Keith (Brown)."

Otherwise, Tennessee's Robert Meachem and LSU's Dwayne Bowe were the two best receivers Castille saw last year.

"They're both big and fast," he said.

Of course Castille made as big an impression at Neyland Stadium as Meachem did in the Alabama-Tennessee game last year. He picked off Erik Ainge twice and raced back 60 yards toward the checkerboard end zone with one of those interceptions late in the first half with the score tied 3-3.

To his credit, Ainge never gave up on the play and eventually brushed Castille out of bounds at the Tennessee eight-yard line.

"If I had it to do over again, I would have scored," Castille said. "I would have found a way to score, if I had to cut back or whatever."

"I was in front of him, but he barely just pushed on me and got me out of bounds."

Alabama moved the ball from the Tennessee 8, eventually reaching fourth-and-goal from the one. The Tide kicked a field goal in what turned into a 16-13 loss.

"It was very frustrating," Castille said. "I was right there, wanting to score so bad."

"That's life. You don't get everything you want out of life." ■



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OFFENSIVE LINE WORK

Caldwell sees Bama moving in new direction

Alabama center Antoine Caldwell won't be joking around much at the football complex and on the practice field this spring. Things have gotten a lot more serious since Nick Saban came to town.

"He's a business guy," Caldwell said of his new head coach. "He's not the kind of guy Coach (Mike) Shula was, where you could feel comfortable with talking to him or cracking a joke here or there. He's a head football coach. Maybe it's a different approach. I guess that's what we needed around here maybe. Right now I love him, I respect him—well I can't say I love him—I like the guy, I respect him. I feel like he's taking us to a new direction and I feel like everybody is on the same page."

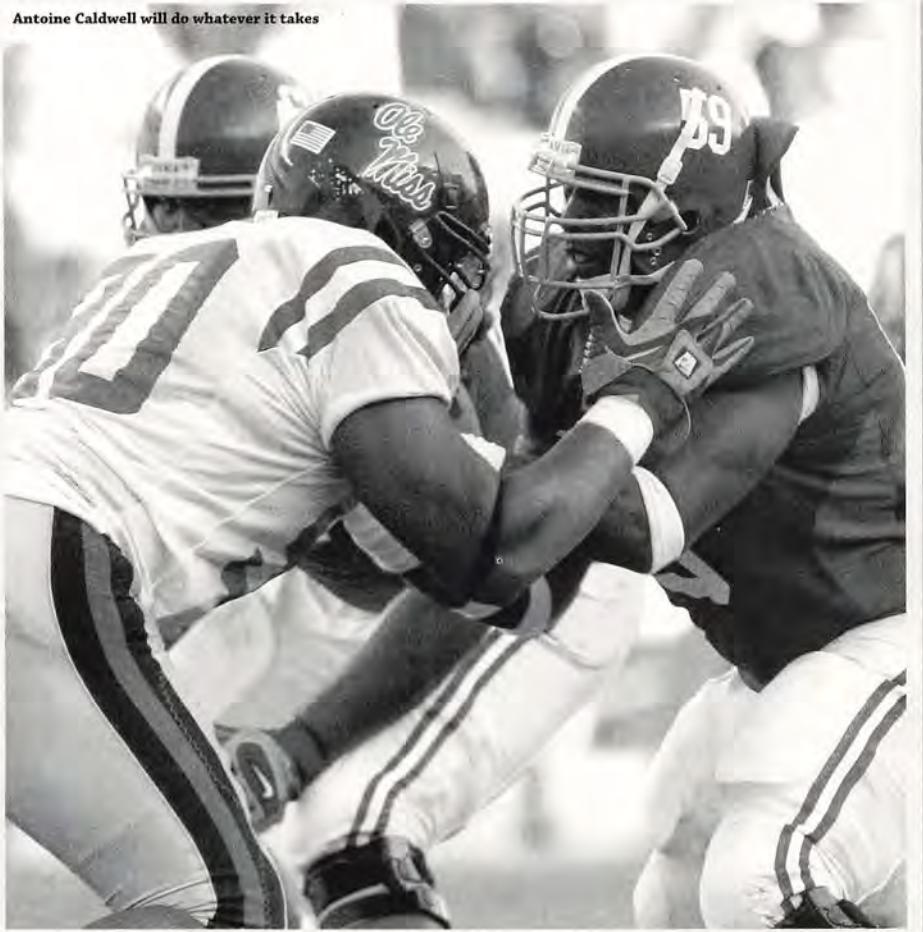
"You know when he walks into the room everybody is going to be ears open and eyes on him," Caldwell said. "He's an up-front guy. If anybody's met him or anybody's talked to him that's the way he is. His whole demeanor is business. I feel like it's kind of a good thing for us."

One thing Saban brought to Alabama was a renewed intensity in strength and conditioning. Saban retained Rocky Colburn to run the program, and added Scott Cochran to assist him. Caldwell said that combination has been a productive one.

"The Fourth Quarter Program with Coach Saban is probably the toughest program I've been a part of since I've been at Alabama," he said. "It's mentally challenging and physically challenging. I feel like it's a total body workout. In the past I felt like we did some things that focused on certain parts of our bodies more than others. This Fourth Quarter Program is the most balanced thing we've done since I've been there."

It took just a bit longer for the

Antoine Caldwell will do whatever it takes



University of Alabama

offensive line to get on the same page due to the departure of Steve Marshall to the NFL. Saban hired Marshall the week after his own introduction, but three weeks later Marshall took another job with the Cleveland Browns.

"Coach Marshall was a good guy but I kind of had the feeling while he was there that he was out of his element a little bit," Caldwell

said. "I know he'd been in the NFL for a long time. It probably didn't feel right to him and it kind of didn't feel right to me when I had met with him and everything. He didn't say anything out of the way or anything, but it was a vibe I picked up from him. I didn't feel like he was real comfortable around there. He had another calling and he did what he did."

Joe Pendry was reassigned to coach the

offensive line. Caldwell said the things he and his linemates are learning now aren't so different from what they did under Shula and his offensive line coach, Bob Connelly.

"It's all the same technique just a little different terminology," he said. "They pretty much have the same concept, the same principles. They want to be physical. We've kind of switched up blocking schemes. We did a lot more man blocking with Coach Shula and Coach Connelly last year and now we're going to be doing a lot more zone blocking and stuff like teams do nowadays."

Caldwell never seems to be on the wrong page. He started every game for Alabama last season and played 810 snaps (an average of 62 plays per game), behind only three other Crimson Tide players.

But in football it takes five to make an offensive line. Right now, Alabama has only two who have shown the ability to play at a consistently high level in the Southeastern Conference: Left tackle Andre Smith and Caldwell. Justin Britt returns after starting last season at left guard, and his meanness and toughness helped him in his first season at guard. B.J. Stabler and Marlon Davis both started at right guard last year and had flashes of competence.

Smith led all Alabama players in number of snaps with 870-31 more than the next closest man, Jeffrey Dukes. And Smith did so as a true freshman at left tackle, one of the most important and difficult-to-master positions on the football field. Caldwell, who himself was close to moving into a prominent role on the offensive line as a true freshman before hurting his ankle just before the beginning of the season, said Smith could only be helped by seeing all that playing time.

"I don't really see it as a toll that's been put on him," Caldwell said. "I see it as experience. That amount of snaps has put him that much more ahead of the game, and he's already ahead of the game anyway because of his talent and how humble he is. I've seen him mature a lot since the season has been over. The funny thing about it is Andre right now is one of the best offensive linemen I've seen as a true freshman or as an offensive lineman, period. To be that young I feel like he still has a little bit to go but he doesn't have that much more to get better on. I mean he's quick, he's fast, he's athletic, he's physical. He's pretty much everything you

want in an offensive lineman."

Former coaches and current teammates, including Caldwell, always used the word humble to describe Andre.

"For him to be as highly touted as he was," Caldwell said, "the number one player in the nation and to start as a true freshman it's just a credit to him how humble he is. He's not cocky. You don't ever see him joking around about 'I'm this, I'm that.' All that speaks volumes about how his parents have done such a good job with him and what kind of character he has. He's never been that type of person. He's always been quiet and kept to himself. He likes to have a good time but he never does throw out little comments about being cocky."

"The only thing he can improve on is just the mental capacity," Caldwell said. "How much information he can take in and how much he's able to retain. I feel like that's about the only thing he can get better on, and of course that's going to take some more time."

The big question for Alabama's offensive line will be at right tackle. Chris Capps, who started at left tackle two years ago and at right tackle last season, had shoulder surgery in the off-season, missing valuable time in the weight room. Stabler, who started at right guard last year, has moved over

to right tackle to work the position along with inexperienced sophomore Drew Davis and redshirt freshman Taylor Pharr. Pendry could have another option in Caldwell if sophomore Evan Cardwell continues developing at center.

"If someone steps up and is ready to take the center position I guess I could bounce around," Caldwell said. "Right now nothing's in stone and I could be at guard tomorrow or tackle tomorrow. It's just whatever Coach Pendry wants."

Caldwell played tackle his sophomore and junior years of high school before he moved inside to guard. He has started one season each at guard and center for Alabama, and during the Auburn game when no one else could block Quentin Groves, Caldwell moved out to right tackle and fought him off.

"He's hit on it a couple of times," Caldwell said of the potential for Pendry to move Caldwell to tackle. "We've never had an in-depth conversation about it. He mentioned when he first got hired that he had watched the Auburn game and how I moved around a little bit and he told me he was going to need my versatility. Whatever it is that makes the offensive line better and whatever I can do to make the team better. I don't care at all." ■

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Change

After realizing its mistake, the NCAA Rules Committee has eliminated the clock-rule changes it enacted before the 2006 football season

Isaiah Stanback and the University of Washington were on USC's 20 yard line with a chance for one more play when time ran out.

Robert Laberge/Getty

:07

:06

:05

:04

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:01

TIME

TIME

 After Florida ran just 37 plays in a loss at Auburn, Gator coach Urban Meyer was livid.

After Wisconsin twice kicked off out of bounds to help end the first half, Penn State coach Joe Paterno cried foul.

After Auburn ran 37 plays in a loss at Georgia, Tiger coach Tommy Tuberville was left scratching his head.

After some Division II and III games lasted just slightly more than two hours, coaches complained they didn't get a chance to play enough second-team guys.

The source of the frustration: The new clock rules designed to shave 10 to 15 minutes off the length of a college football game.

Some of the changes were drastic, and led to some dramatic results. Fewer plays. Fewer points. Fewer fourth-quarter comebacks.

Yes, the contests were shorter, close to the three-hour goal, but the game was

changed too much, critics complained.

The NCAA Rules Committee listened.

After enacting a number of clock-rule changes that did reduce the length of games by 10 to 15 minutes – depending on the conference – the Rules Committee ditched every change it adopted in 2006 for another set of rules it hopes won't have a major impact on the way the game is played.

“The hope is that you can reduce the length of a game without reducing the number of plays,” said Rogers Redding, supervisor of Southeastern Conference football officials.

In 2006, the clock started on a kickoff when the ball was kicked. In 2007, it will revert back to the clock starting when the ball is legally touched.

In 2006, the clock started on a change of possession after the officials signaled ready for play. Now, the clock will start when the ball is snapped.

Four other changes will help shorten games. A team timeout that doesn't piggyback a television timeout will be cut by 30 seconds. After a television timeout, the play clock will show 15 seconds, not 25. Kickoffs will be moved from the 35-yard line back to the 30, ensuring more runbacks and fewer

touchbacks. And the review time for instant replay will be capped at two minutes. One replay last year took 13 minutes.

By discarding every clock-rule change that was adopted in 2006, the Rules Committee all but admitted it jumped the gun on implementing the changes without regard to the impact.

And those changes did have an impact.

Meyer, who guided Florida to the national championship, was one of the most vocal critics. When he was at Bowling Green, one of his teams ran 100 plays in a game. Florida averaged about 60 snaps last season.

“In the SEC, with the quality of defenses and the way teams kind of hold the ball, you just don't get many possessions,” Meyer said.

“I've never seen anything like it. I've never seen a team have three possessions in the first half.”

Tennessee had two games with only three possessions in a half. The Vols had just six possessions in the game against Air Force. They had 10 or fewer possessions – not counting run-out-the-half drives – in seven games. And the Tennessee-Marshall game, which was not on network television and had an abbreviated halftime because of bad weather, lasted 2:36.

BY JIMMY HYAMS
scout.com

"It's not a good rule," Meyer protested. "It's a bad rule. I don't like it. It changes the whole way you call a game. It cheats the fans. It cheats the players. It cheats everybody involved in college football."

David Cutcliffe, Tennessee's offensive coordinator, was on the Meyer bandwagon. He despised the 2006 clock rules.

"It was just a pain, as a coach, to deal with," said Cutcliffe, who, nonetheless, helped Tennessee average almost two touchdowns more per game. "I didn't see anything wrong with the game. Nobody could explain to me why we were changing the rules. I never heard a single complaint about too many plays in a game. I thought fans wanted their money's worth."

The changes adopted by the Rules Committee in February should soften the positions of Meyer, Cutcliffe and many other coaches.

Redding said the new rules should restore the number of plays while shortening the length of games because some of the "dead time" will be reduced.

"That was the philosophy of the Rules Committee — putting plays back into the game for the benefit of the student-athlete, for the entertainment of the game, but at the same time, (reducing) the overall elapsed time of a game," Redding said.

All of the rules that were adopted were proposed by coaches.

Interestingly, some coaches supported the 2006 clock rules—most of them defensive-minded coaches.

Auburn's Tommy Tuberville, the only Division I coach on the 11-member Rules Committee, favored the way the game was shortened in 2006.

"I like the length of the games," Tuberville said of the three-hour target. "We had some four-hour games (in the past) and that's too long. Our players like it. They're fresher on Sunday than they were (before). I like the tempo of the game. If you play around 60 plays, that's plenty for college football."

But what if you have only 37 snaps? Or 45 snaps?

Some college coaches point out the college game lasts longer than the NFL game. But it should be noted the NFL has a 12-minute halftime, compared to 20 minutes in college.

Tuberville and others also said having fewer plays per game makes up for the fact the NCAA approved playing a 12-game regular season. For teams in conferences with



URBAN MEYER

Streeter Lecka/Getty

championship games, the season can stretch to 14 games, 15 if you play Hawaii.

It's worth noting that despite losing about 10 plays per game, scoring was up in the SEC in 2006. Ten teams averaged more than 22 points compared to seven in 2005. In total offense, eight teams averaged more than 350 yards compared to seven the year before. The only two teams that had a significant drop in total offense were Auburn and Georgia, both of whom had inconsistent quarterback play.

From an officiating standpoint, the new rules had little impact.

"It's a rule change," said veteran SEC official Rocky Goode. "We face them every year and it's up to us to administer them. I couldn't make a comment on whether it's good for the game or not. But it has no affect on the officials."

Goode said shorter games don't have less physical wear and tear on officials like it might for players.

"You're tested in all games by your mental focus," Goode said, "and that hasn't changed, no matter what the rules are."

TV DRIVING FORCE FOR CHANGE

The primary reason for the clock changes was television. TV folks didn't

want games lasting more than three hours because it interfered with the beginning of the next game.

Often times, fans would miss the first few minutes, even the first quarter, of the second game of a doubleheader because the first game would take more than the allotted three hours.

So, TV officials pitched the changes to the NCAA Rules Committee, which bought into the idea, primarily because TV pays millions to carry college football games. And since TV won't limit its commercials, clock rules were adopted to shorten games.

Michael Clark, head coach at Bridgewater (Va.) College and chairman of the Rules Committee, said TV was one of the factors, but not the only factor.

"The game was getting longer on its own," Clark said. "People were passing the football more. We had replay. And the twelfth game on the Division I level was discussed. To say TV was the only factor, that would be inaccurate."

Clark said rule changes had been debated for several years before they were adopted prior to the 2006 season.

"I don't think a three-hour, 40-minute football game is healthy for a lot of reasons," Clark said. "Somebody made the comment, 'You can't bury your head in the sand on this. It's better to be proactive than to react.'"

Clark said Michigan coach Lloyd Carr, a former Rules Committee member, asked the question: "How do we continue to make the game better and continue to protect our student athletes who are playing the game?"

RULES COMMITTEE MAKEUP INTRIGUING

Tuberville is the only Division I-A coach on the 11-member panel. Division I-A has three total representatives, Division 1-AA has two, Division II has two and Division III has four, including the chairman.

Why does Division III have four? Why does Division III have a majority voice in rule changes that affect 1-A?

The relatively equal distribution of representation perhaps led to the Rules Committee's strong feeling that the same rules should apply to all divisions. And according to Redding, who attended the meetings, there was no attempt by Division I representatives to pull a power play.

Interestingly, the smaller schools were just as opposed to the 2006 clock-rule changes as Division 1-A. With so few Division II and III games on television, some of those contests lasted just over two hours, and they lost more plays per game than Division 1-A.

Clark said games in Divisions II and III were cut by an average of 25 minutes, from about three hours down to just over 2 hours and 30 minutes. But he wasn't alarmed by that.

"I've seen some great games played in 2:35 or 2:40," Clark said. "The time of the game doesn't need to be the variable to determine if this is a good game or not. How the game is played and what influences the game are what we have to look at. The clock will always be a variable, but you don't want it to be the dominant variable."

Clark said some coaches at smaller schools were bothered by the fact that shorter games meant less playing time for marginal players.

Clark also agreed with a comment made by South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier, who said fewer plays will lead to fewer upsets.

"I was favored in ten games and got beat twice by the underdog," Clark said. "I can look back and say the clock didn't beat me, but I wish I'd had six or seven more plays to let my talent pool take over."

Clark emphasized that if you want to reduce the length of games, you must make some rule adjustments.

"Everybody wants a something-for-nothing exchange: 'We need to speed up the game but I don't want to give anything up,'" Clark said. "I don't think that's out there, but there might be a middle ground to keep people happy and content on both sides of the issue."

EARLY REACTION WAS NEGLIGIBLE

When the clock changes were adopted before the 2006 season, they didn't get much attention. You didn't see coaches raising red flags.

When Redding presented the clock changes to SEC football coaches in early June, it was as if he were discussing the playoff system used in 1-AA.

"I didn't get much reaction at all," Redding said. "I think the people had not processed it. We talked through it. We had some questions. I don't think people



STEVE SPURRIER

Doug Bend/Getty

connected in June what it might do in terms of number of plays."

Redding wasn't surprised by the lack of concern at the time because it was early June. He said that often proposed rule changes are tweaked up until just weeks before a season starts, and that was the case with the clock changes.

Once the season began, the grumping hit the fan.

"I think it's the nature of coaches (to oppose change)," Clark said. "Everybody is secure in what they have."

What they have now is a new set of rules that seem to be a proper compromise - restore most of the plays lost while marginally altering the game.

After a TV timeout, coaches must make sure their players are ready for action because the play clock will be set at 15 seconds. This is expected to cut three minutes out of a game.

Reducing the team timeout by 30 seconds could be interesting. The old rule said a team had 1:05 to set up strategy before the 25-second play clock began. Now, you get 35 seconds before the official signals ready for play. This could cut another three minutes.

By kicking off from the 30-yard line, it is estimated that more than 90 percent of kickoffs will be returned. That will lesson the dead time of a touchback. If a kick goes out of bounds, the receiving team can take the ball at its 35 - the same as last year. One

coach said members of the Rules Committee must not know what it's like to cover a kickoff, which can be one of the most violent plays in football.

Capping replay review at two minutes might not be a huge time saver. The average replay in the SEC consumed 1:49. Some replays exceeded three minutes, but those were usually to determine the spot on the field or down and distance or time on the clock - or all three.

"The idea of instant replay is to get it right," Redding said, "but you also don't want to be so intrusive on the game that fans and the TV audience are sitting there twiddling their thumbs while you look at instant replay. Our general feeling is, if you can't get enough views in two minutes, then you might as well default to the call on the field."

While the replay decision must be made within two minutes, more time might be allotted to locate the spot on the field or correct the time clock.

In 2008, college football will adopt a rule that is unique to the NFL - a 40-second play clock. That is designed to provide consistency with officials regarding putting the ball in play.

In some conferences, after a play is blown dead, officials typically wait 12 to 15 seconds before starting the play clock. That closely mirrors the use of a 40-second play clock, which starts when the previous play ends. But in other conferences, the ready-for-play signal could be five seconds quicker or longer.

"It will provide more consistency across the country about how long it takes before the ball is marked ready for play," Redding said. "What coaches tell us is, when they play in another conference or intersectional games, it's uneven in terms of how soon after the ball is dead that different referees in different parts of the country whistle it ready for play. So, this will provide some consistency around that."

"There are some challenges associated with this. One of the reasons we put it off for a year was to give us a little more time to think about it. There are some equipment issues. Stadium clocks will have to have 40-second and 25-second clocks because after a timeout for a measurement or penalty, it's a 25-second clock."

"We'll look closely at the NFL model and get some advice from the NFL folks about how it operates and try to understand it before we roll it out in the 2008 season." ■

MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Homer Smith has thoughts on football time

No less a football expert than Homer Smith thought there were more important rules changes than the efforts to shorten the game last year. He thought "a fairly significant change" was that there would be no timeout for crowd noise, the official telling the quarterback to get on with it.

Smith, who is retired in Tuscaloosa, keeps his hand in football with a website devoted to technical football, www.HomerSmith.net. He has the credentials. He was offensive coordinator for Alabama under Bill Curry (1988-89) and under Gene Stallings (1994).

His football experience spans over five decades. Smith served as Head Coach at Davidson College, Pacific, and the U.S. Military Academy, and as offensive coordinator at the U.S. Air Force Academy, UCLA (three times), the Kansas City Chiefs, Alabama (twice), and Arizona. In 1990 The Sporting News named him Offensive Coach of the Year, and in 1997 he was a finalist for the Broyles Award, which goes to the nation's top assistant coach.

Smith has coached in four Rose Bowls, Citrus, Fiesta, Sugar, Tangerine, Freedom, Bluebonnet, Sun, Gator, and Insight.com Bowls. His academic degrees are from Princeton, Stanford, and Harvard.

Smith has consulted with a number of college football teams since retiring.

When he talks football, it's worth listening.

"Last year they wanted to shorten the game," Smith said. "They wanted the fans in the seats out of the stadium quicker, so they shortened halftime and did some little things.

"What many people considered to be a big change was that when the ball changed hands, the clock would start on the ready signal. Previously (after a change of possession on a turnover or punt) the clock would start on the snap. People thought that would eliminate 10 or 15 plays per game, and it did take some time out of the game."

Smith said that change should have been easy to accept and understand, pointing out that it made change of possession first downs

Homer Smith



University of Alabama

like other first downs.

A rules change that drew a lot of attention last year was the clock starting when a kickoff was kicked, rather than when the return was begun. Smith said concern over the kickoff rule "was kind of silly, because from the time you kick until someone catches it is about four seconds. You've have to kick off 15 times to get rid of a minute. It was non-consequential. There were some scenarios of unexpected developments, but I don't think the rule was ever a factor."

He also thought about the rule whereby if a team scored a touchdown as time expired and the extra point was not going to be a factor in the outcome that the extra point would not be kicked. "I just thought what a shame it would be if it cost a kicker a record," Smith said.

Smith knows how to shorten the time of a game. "Instant replay," he said. "That has added a lot of time. Picture how many times last year you saw the officials standing around talking while the replay officials checked. One coach said 'It will change the game as we know it.' It didn't do that. No one can remember any significant change it made. It put a whole

new section in the rulebook and it added a lot of time to the game. It seems to me they could whittle away some of that, and I understand that is proposed. We got along for years without replay officials. I don't think it's going to change the outcome very often."

The length of a game isn't the only aspect of the clock that comes into play in a football game. A critical aspect in close games often is clock management in the final minutes. It is a time of extreme stress and frequently confusion.

"It is very, very difficult," Smith said. "It gets everyone eventually. You can study and prepare for it, but things happen. It requires a lot of arithmetic and people screw it up. It's hard to anticipate all the things that can happen."

Smith admits to speaking from experience.

"We were out in the coliseum in Los Angeles, UCLA playing Southern Cal, and we needed a field goal," Smith said. "We drive down the field and we're moving the ball well. And we're about in range of Norm Johnson, the best kicker in the country. Our quarterback hesitated because he had achieved his objective. We had gotten to the 30-yard line or so with 28 seconds. He's got time to call and run another play. If he gets what he needs he's got time to call a time out. But the offensive coordinator had not trained him to recognize that time. He hesitated, too much time ran off clock, and he had to let time run down and call time. That left the field goal kicker with just a little too long and it came up just short. If he had gotten it down there...but he didn't. It was my biggest screw-up because it cost us a game and I should have been fired, but I wasn't."

Smith added a note to that game. "There is confusion on the sidelines in that situation," he said. "(Head Coach Terry Donahue) and (Rick) Neuhaus are excited. I was in the press box. At least I thought I was. Years later I saw the game on the Classics and there I was on the sidelines, too. Terry had called me down late in the game and I didn't even remember it. I would have passed a lie detector test that

I was in the press box."

He said, "I also remember leaving (placekicker) Phillip Doyle a little too far out and losing a game to LSU."

Smith said "the crux (of time management) is there is not a right way and a wrong way. The decisions you have are on a spectrum. If you have 10 coaches, five will come down on one side and five on the other. There's not just one right way."

"There are procedures and things that everyone does the same way. Everyone knows to hustle the field goal team onto the field. Everyone knows to throw the ball into the end zone and to not get sacked. Those are procedural things and they are easy and can be practiced."

"But the things that can require decisions can be difficult. For instance, going down field and needing a field goal and its fourth down and you need five yards. The first down is two yards away. The clock is moving. You can spike ball. You can kick from too far away. You can go for first down. Or you can go for touchdown. That's hard because if it fails the game ends and you get nailed."

"There are a lot of numbers. You have to know how long it's going to take to do different things."

Smith said, "Coaches can get criticized when they shouldn't. A few years ago Georgia was playing Auburn and had second down at the goalline needing a touchdown to win. There were 18 seconds left. Georgia could run one time or throw two or three times. They ran and didn't make it and everyone criticized the decision. But there are things that can go wrong when you try to pass—a sack, a hold, an interception. And Georgia was a running team with the best runner in the league. So they were criticized, but it was the right decision."

Smith also noted that while Alabama was "involved in a lot of little things that have made a difference" in the past few years that "Mike Shula was pretty good with the clock. I don't remember him getting criticized for a clock screw-up."

Smith said that former Bama quarterback "David Smith was one of the best" at clock management.

Sometimes the clock is not the enemy. Smith remembered Alabama going to Jackson to play Ole Miss in 1989. It seemed the game was just a few minutes old before Mississippi was off and running, getting a quick 21-0 lead. But there was plenty of time remaining.

"We were pretty good," Smith said. "(Quarterback) Gary Hollingsworth had five

guys who really worked to make his passes successful. Most quarterbacks have one."

"Bill Curry was cool as a leader. He said to stay with the game plan."

"In the meantime an Ole Miss player ran the length of our bench taunting our players. You don't do that to Alabama players. Our whole team went nuts."

"I'm telling Hollingsworth that this is the situation you find yourself as a quarterback and a passer, that this is where you find yourself. And he did."

"There was plenty of time. We stayed with the game plan."

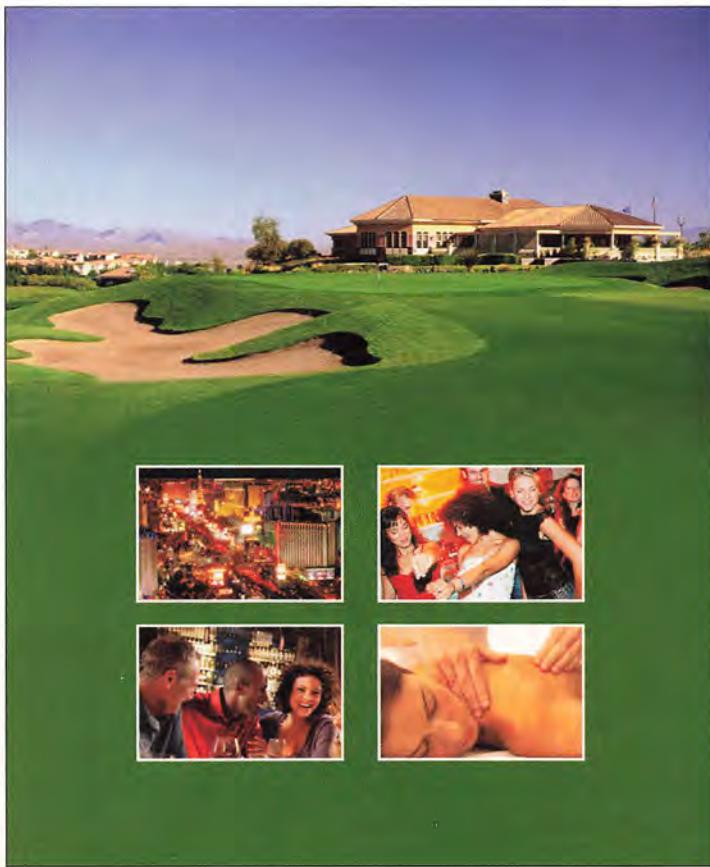
That game plan resulted in 62 unanswered points as Alabama rolled to a 62-27 victory.

"That passing show was the result of some great defense and great offensive blocking and running," Smith said. It was a total team effort. They made a mistake taunting and they paid for it."

That wasn't a fluke. Two weeks later Smith's offense had 32 first downs in a win over Tennessee.

Those were some good times.

And Smith thinks these are the best of times for college football. He said, "I think it is the best show on television. It's fantastic. I think it's at its best."



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FINAL 2006 ALABAMA FOOTBALL STATISTICS

Record: 6-7 SEC: 2-6 Tuscaloosa: 6-2 Road: 0-4 Neutral: 0-1

Individual Offense

Team

Individual Defense

2006 ALABAMA FOOTBALL RESULTS

Date	Opponent	Site	Result or Central Time (TV)	(Attendance) or Series Record
Sept. 2	Hawaii	Tuscaloosa	UofA 25, Hawaii 17	(92,138)
Sept. 9	Vanderbilt	Tuscaloosa	UofA 13, Vanderbilt 10	(92,138)
Sept. 16	Louisiana-Monroe	Tuscaloosa	UA 41, Monroe 7	(92,138)
Sept. 23	Arkansas	Fayetteville	Arkansas 24, UA 23 (2 OT)	(74,687)
Sept. 30	Florida	Gainesville	Florida 28, UA 13	(90,671)
Oct. 7	Duke	Tuscaloosa	UA 30, Duke 14	(92,138)
Oct. 14	Mississippi	Tuscaloosa	UA 26, Ole Miss 23 (OT)	(92,138)
Oct. 21	Tennessee	Knoxville	UT 16, UA 13	(106,695)
Oct. 28	Florida Int'l (HC)	Tuscaloosa	UA 38, FIU 3	(92,138)
Nov. 4	Mississippi State	Tuscaloosa	MSU 24, UA 16	(92,138)
Nov. 11	LSU	Baton Rouge	LSU 28, UA 14	(92,588)
Nov. 18	Auburn	Tuscaloosa	AU 22, UA 15	(92,138)
Dec. 28	Oklahoma State	Independence Bowl	OSU 34, UA 31	(45,054)



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GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS



DETERMINED To Do BETTER

Gottfried will examine personnel and toughness

When Mark Gottfried looks at what he has on hand for his University of Alabama basketball team for next season he will certainly think the cupboard is awfully full despite the loss of big man Jermareo Davidson. Davidson was the only senior on the 2006-07 Crimson Tide squad.

Gottfried has every reason to believe that All-Everything point guard Ron Steele will return to full health with months to rest his battered knees. Expect Steele to participate in fewer summer camp games in order to prepare for his senior season at Alabama. Barring an unexpected, ill-advised early departure, Richard Hendrix, who was Alabama's best player and leading scorer with 14.6 points per game this season, should once again be one of the best post players in the Southeastern Conference as a junior next season.

Gottfried can count on Mykal Riley's 13 points a game being there and hopefully on Riley being a more experienced and well-rounded player after transferring from junior college. And the same goes for Alonzo Gee, who averaged 13 a game and will be a junior. Mikhail Torrance and Justin Tubbs will no longer be pups, and Demetrius Jemison returns off a freshman season that was more active than most experts would have predicted for the 6-7 inside player. New blood and superb talent will be added in the form of three newcomers: point guard Rico Pickett, forward Justin Knox and shooting guard Senario Hillman.

Alabama won 20 games and had a chance to win the Southeastern Conference Western Division for the second year in a row on the final day of the season, and missed the NCAA Tournament for the first time in six years.



University of Alabama

"Some really good basketball teams all around the country don't go to the NCAA tournament," Gottfried said. "That's why we value it. I feel good about where our program is. I'm disappointed in this year but I feel good about the program. It makes you more hungry and more determined as a coach. We had a great run of five NCAA tournaments, but I want to be there every year."

It cannot be forgotten that preseason prognostications and Alabama's own goals for the season were much higher than simply making it to a sixth straight NCAA Tournament. Most experts had Alabama projected to win the Southeastern Conference Western Division, as one of the top ten teams in the country, and some even as a Final Four caliber squad. Steele's knee injury, what was then referred to as tendonitis, wasn't even

supposed to be a bump in the road and might only cost him to miss the first two games at most. The tendonitis persisted, and then on December 7 against Notre Dame he twisted his opposite ankle. Then the other knee began hurting.

He scored in double figures four times in Southeastern Conference games and looked like the Ron Steele of old only twice, in a loss at Auburn and a regular season win over Kentucky. Even while hobbled he hit a last second shot to lift Alabama to a win over Georgia, but it eventually got to the point where he was more of a liability than an asset when on the court.

Further explanation from Gottfried on Steele's knees were that the bottom of his femur rubbed on the top of his kneecap, and anytime he planted his foot the pain of bone rubbing against bone shot through his leg, first in one knee and then in the other.

In addition to the injury to Bama's best player, off-the-court tragedy spilled over onto the court lending other distractions. Davidson's brother was shot and hospitalized. Davidson was returning with his girlfriend from a trip to visit his brother in the hospital, and an automobile accident took her life while Davidson walked away with only scratches. Nikki Davis, Davidson's girlfriend, was also a former trainer and known as a friend to everyone in the athletics department. Davidson's brother later died. Hendrix's high school teammate and friend was killed in a shooting inside a restaurant in Huntsville. The game of basketball is, and should be, secondary to these matters of life and death, but the team did not go unaffected by these happenings. Davidson

lost weight and strength, got out of shape, and missed practice for much of November and part of December.

Alabama finished the season with a 20-12 overall record and a disappointing 7-9 finish in the SEC. It was Gottfried's fourth losing season in conference games in his nine years at Alabama.

"I'm glad there are enough people who care about this program to be upset," he said. "It's a long way from where it was when I got here. It's no different than any other year that at the end of the season you evaluate everything from top to bottom, starting with myself. But when you have a disappointing year all of that evaluation is magnified."

He has three seasons with a winning SEC record and two .500 SEC seasons. Taking out the first three seasons when he was rebuilding, Gottfried's last 6 years of SEC play has seen a 56-40 record (58.3 per cent), three winning seasons, two losing and one .500 season. For comparison, C.M. Newton's SEC record in 12 years was 131-85 (60.6 per cent) with nine winning seasons and three losing seasons (after Newton's first three years he had nine consecutive winning seasons in league play, 119-43, 73.5 per cent.) Wimp Sanderson was 132-82 (61.7) with 10 winning and two losing conference worksheets. David Hobbs was 50-46 (52.1) in six years, with three winning and three losing seasons.

Gottfried admitted that his team this season lacked toughness and consistency ("At times we had that toughness, and times we did not. And that comes right back to me.") And it also lacked a competent point guard in almost every game.

"Realistically, everything changed for us when Ron Steele got hurt," Gottfried said. "That's what makes it difficult. I still don't like it and it doesn't excuse anything, but it gives you a different feeling. You can't avoid talking about guy because he is heart and soul of this team and you have to keep addressing it: He has not been healthy the whole year. He has not been 100 per cent one single time the whole year. He has not been there for five minutes the whole season. He has had times where he fought through it and had a couple of good games, but since October he has not had the blessing of being healthy."

"He's fought through it and played through pain and with pain, battled all the



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way. You couldn't ask for anything more from Ron Steele. He battled all the way through the Tennessee game basically when the wheels fell off."

In hindsight, it was probably the inability to prepare for the possibility of life without Steele (or perhaps even worse, life with Steele on the court but unable to defend, score or drive to the basket) that was the greatest technical failing of this team. For most of the season sophomore Brandon Hollinger was Plan B at point guard. At times he performed well but in crucial situations he lacked control of the offensive tempo—from Alabama's 75-69 loss at Ole Miss which began the stretch where Alabama lost 8 of its last 10 games, to the first-round NIT game when Hollinger's shot was blocked in Bama's last attempt in

overtime (a game in which he had a career high 19 points). Freshman Mikhail Torrance got significant minutes at the point against Tennessee, Auburn and at home against Ole Miss, showing the ability to beat defenders off the dribble, but was obviously too raw to be a reliable caretaker of the Alabama offense.

Alabama averaged 74 points per game, sixth-best in the Southeastern Conference, and allowed a ninth-best 69.5 points per game by opponents. Alabama was the league's second-best free-throw shooting team at 70.8 per cent (472 of 667), and seventh best in field goal percentage at 45.6 per cent (844 of 1849). Bama's field goal per cent defense was in the middle of the pack too. Opponents shot 41.9 per cent (831 of 1984). Bama shot 37.1 per cent from three-point range (209 of 562), fourth in the league. Opponents shot 30.8 per cent from beyond the arc (221 of 717), second in the league. Opponents also had the second-most three point attempts in the league. Bama was first in rebounding with 38.8 rebounds per game. The team's assist-to-turnover ratio was 11th in the SEC at .95 (420 assists, 441 turnovers).

Gottfried expressed disappointment, and failure at what the team had accomplished this season, and said that even with all the returning talent on his team, "There won't be a returning starter in my mind. I'm going to evaluate everything, starting with myself. It starts with me, and then my staff, and then the team."

Alabama finished its regular season with a 91-67 loss on the road at Mississippi State. It was the fourth such blowout the Crimson Tide had suffered on the road this season. Arkansas blasted Alabama by 27 in the conference opener, Vanderbilt beat Bama by 21 and Auburn hung an 81-57 humiliation on the Tide.

In a word, "Toughness," Gottfried said, was at the heart of the team's shortcomings. "I think that filters into every area. I have failed in getting this particular team to compete consistently from a toughness standpoint."

Interestingly, Gottfried noted recruiting as being one of the necessary evaluations made in closing the toughness gap the Tide suffered this season. "Some of that is in recruiting and some of it is in coaching," he said. "Sometimes when you recruit players they are who they are." ■



BASEBALL BY MITCH DOBBS

A SIGHT TO BEHOLD

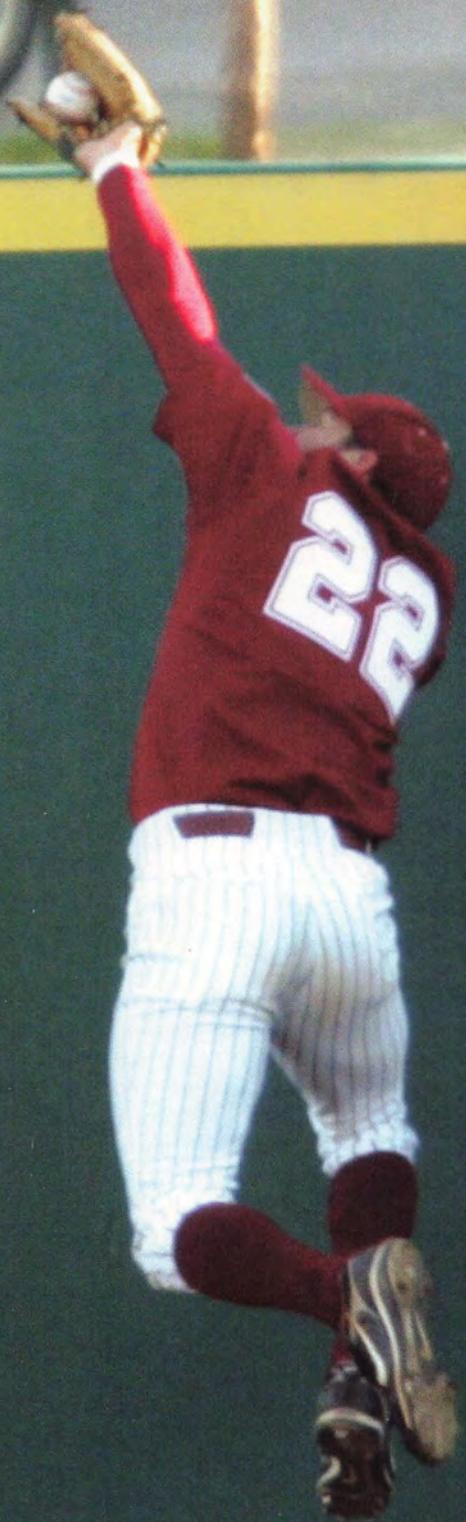
*Matthes much improved
after vision correction*

If you can't see the baseball it's hard to hit it. That's a problem Kent Matthes is hoping to avoid this year as Alabama's everyday clean-up hitter, and a problem the 6-3, 200-pound sophomore from Orlando, Florida, can't afford happening again as it did a year ago.

"I was driving down the road and I just couldn't read a street sign very well," Matthes said. "So I went to the eye doctor the next day and learned I had 20/60 vision in my left eye and 20/80 in my right eye."

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Kent Matthes was SEC Player of the Week earlier this year



University of Alabama

That's why Matthes was pulled from the lineup after striking out against UAB that same week after he had started as the designated hitter.

"I couldn't pick up the spin on the ball," he said. "After my second at-bat, I got pulled out of the game. The UAB pitcher was throwing change-ups and I was swinging at the ball when it was about halfway to the plate. The contacts I was wearing were causing my eyes to be red and dry and that was causing my vision to be worse. The contacts were causing my eye to change and it was like a dirty camera lens. It was real glossy and they were moving around on me."

As a freshman, Matthes played in 31 games and made 14 starts, closing with a strong finish to the season.

"Last year as a spot player, as a freshman, I never knew when I was going to get called on," he said. "Whether it was in the ninth inning, or I didn't know if I was going to start, go in as a pinch runner or go in as a defensive replacement. I didn't really know what was going on so you have to be ready at all times."

A month and a half after his vision escaped him, Matthes stroked his first career home run. It came against LSU's Clay Dirks in the Southeastern Conference Tournament at the Hoover Met. For the season, he hit .200 (11 for 55) with one home run and eight runs batted in. But Matthes was 6 for 21 (.286) with one home run and five runs batted in his last eight games. What a difference being able to see can make.

"The doctor gave me some eye drops and I've been using them ever since then," Matthes said. "I've got a softer lens in. I've got to go back periodically and I'm making sure to stay on top of that this year."

Now he is Alabama's four-hole hitter, the man usually asked to carry the bulk of the power in a team's batting order.

"It's different kinds of pressure to be getting five at bats and being in the middle of the lineup and being responsible for driving in runs," he said. "When you pinch hit you have to get on base to keep the game alive."

Alabama Coach Jim Wells has to hope Matthes adapts to the pressure quickly. The coach said Matthes needs to be productive for

Alabama in that spot.

"He has shown the ability to hit the long ball and he has made some nice plays on defense," Wells said. "He is the guy we need to hit in the middle of the lineup for this team to be successful."

At no time was Matthes' potential on display more than during the second week of the season when he was the SEC Player of the Week. Matthes hit .412 (7-for-17) and cracked four home runs and had 10 runs batted in in four games. He had a .412 on-base mark and six runs scored in that stretch. And included in the week were some highlight-reel catches in right field. In a 12-inning loss to Troy on February 14, Matthes hit an inside-the-park home run and turned in a pair of spectacular catches in right field, including robbing Trojans catcher Beau Brooks of a two-run home run in the eighth inning with a leaping catch over the wall. That catch came with men on base and kept Troy from blowing the game open. Matthes had to run some 30 yards before leaping at the right-center wall and pulling the ball back into the park.

"I had my eye on it," Matthes said. "I

had it tracked the whole way, but I ran out of room. Fortunately I was able to jump up and get it. You really don't get many chances to make catches like that. You rarely get those opportunities. Fortunately I was able to get a good read on the ball and get a good jump."

But Wells would say Matthes is still a story about a work-in-progress rather than a success story. Asked earlier in the year about Matthes' gaudy batting statistics, Wells warned that the sophomore had begun to struggle and those numbers could be very deceiving.

"He has struggled like a lot of guys do when they haven't really played and you stick them in the four-hole," Wells said. "He's having to overcome those mental barriers of dealing with breaking balls away. He'll be a good player but he's not a primetime guy right now. We need him to do as well as he can right now. He's come leaps and bounds from where he was last year, but he can make even more leaps and become a better player."

Some of those leaps, Matthes made last summer. He was named the Winter Pines Warthogs Most Valuable Player in the Florida Collegiate Summer League. He was the starting third baseman in 27 games and batted .274 (29 for 106) with seven home runs and 15 runs batted in. Matthes led the league with seven home runs and ranked fifth with a .519 slugging percentage. In addition to his power numbers, he was 8 for 8 in stolen bases and posted a .905 fielding mark. In June, Matthes also earned the league player of the week honors after going 4 for 9 (.444) with two home runs and three runs batted in.

As a senior at Edgewater High, he batted .409 with 10 home runs and 39 RBIs in 23 games and was a first-team all-state, All-Central Florida and all-county. As a junior he batted .446 with five home runs and 18 runs batted in and was a high school All America.

Alabama baseball has other new starters in its lineup in addition to Matthes, including second baseman Jeff Texada, third baseman Jake Smith, and first baseman Matt Bentley, all facing an uphill challenge of following a Southeastern Conference champion and number four national seed in the NCAA Tournament from last year.

"I think my role, everybody's role is increased this year," Matthes said. "I like getting in there and being able to drive guys in and have a bigger role on this team. I love the responsibility in going up there and being able to show what I can do and help the team. Hopefully I will be able to put up some numbers and produce."

That will look good to everyone. ■

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS

Alabama football means championships and All-Americans and, for many, memories of a man in a houndstooth hat. Some 60 former Alabama players who performed in Crimson and White over a

75-year period tell us **WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE**, and many remember Paul "Bear" Bryant. His time as a Bama player, assistant coach, and 25 years as head coach is a major part of Alabama football, but not the only great era. There have also been national championships won under Wallace Wade and Frank Thomas and Gene Stallings. And part of **WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE** is former Alabama players' expectations of more national titles.

The last coach to lead Alabama to the national championship is Gene Stallings, who played and coached for Coach Bryant before becoming a Hall of Fame caliber coach himself.

Not only have the coaches been legendary but that stellar tradition has spawned players enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame and the NFL's Pro Football Hall of Fame. Now, Gene Stallings and 'BAMA Editor Kirk McNair have collaborated to bring together many of the greatest players ever to wear the Crimson and White to share their memories in **WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE-GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS**.

Among those sharing their memories are: from the '40s and '50s, Harry Gilmer and Bart Starr; from the '60s and '70s, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Ray Perkins, Ken Stabler, Johnny Musso, John Hannah, and Ozzie Newsome; from the '80s and '90s, Mike Shula and Jay Barker. And many more, including those from the new millennium.

Gene Stallings reveals much of his philosophy and also tells the story of how he did not become Alabama's head football coach in 1983. Kirk McNair introduces the players.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE-GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS is now available. The hardcover book is more than 300 pages in an oversized format with archival photographs throughout. To order your copy (\$27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling) call 1-205-345-5074. You may request a personalized autograph from Kirk McNair.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE



GENE STALLINGS
AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS
KIRK McNAIR

HALL OF FAMER

Joe Sewell goes into another Hall of Fame

Former University of Alabama All-America and All-Century Team performer Joe Sewell is among the first-ever Veteran Class inducted into the new National College Baseball Hall of Fame in Lubbock, Texas. The announcement comes after the conclusion of an intensive voting process that began with nominations last February and two elimination ballots over the past year.

Sewell joins Christy Mathewson (Bucknell), Lou Gehrig (Columbia) and John "Jack" Barry (Holy Cross) in the inaugural veteran class. Sewell and Gehrig were teammates and roommates during their days with the New York Yankees.

This is the third Hall of Fame induction for Sewell commemorating his illustrious baseball career. Sewell is also a member of the National Baseball Hall of Fame (1977) and the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.

The Veteran and Historical Committees will research and nominate individuals each year from this pre-1947 era, before the entire voting committee votes them on. These collegiate legends will be officially enshrined during a two-day July celebration of college baseball in Lubbock, Texas, in a ceremony commemorated as 'The Past Meets Present.'

College Baseball Foundation Chairman/CEO John Askins said, "The task of researching and evaluating the veteran nominees is difficult, because they competed prior to the collection of data that is so commonplace today. These men had no sports information personnel that kept track of their every statistic. While records are sketchy at best, this outstanding group had a profound impact on collegiate baseball, both nationally and in their own regions, and their accomplishments have withstood the test of time."

"The pre-1947 designation is not an arbitrary demarcation," said Askins. "The first All America team for college baseball was chosen that year by the coaches, so that

Joe Sewell



University of Alabama

makes it a logical point to separate modern-day players and veteran candidates."

There is no doubt that Joe Sewell was one of the finest baseball players ever to perform for the Alabama Crimson Tide. He was surrounded by an all-star cast of players that produced some of the greatest seasons in Crimson Tide lore. As UA's starting second baseman from 1918-20, Sewell teamed with another future Major League player, shortstop Riggs Stephenson, to form a solid double-play combination. Also, Sewell and Stephenson were regarded as two of the hardest hitters in baseball.

Sewell played on teams that posted a 42-4 (.913) record against college teams. Overall, the Crimson Tide went 44-8 (.846) en route to three Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association titles in 1918, 1919 and 1920. The 1918 team featured five future Major League baseball players—Sewell, Stephenson, Dan Boone, Francis Pratt, and Lena Stiles. They posted a 13-4 record, including a 13-2

mark against college teams. The 1919 team was just as successful, as Alabama went 16-2, including a 15-1 slate against college teams. The Tide won its third straight SIAA title with a 15-2 record in 1920, including a 14-1 mark against college teams.

Sewell was the cornerstone on those successful Bama teams. In 1920, he set every hitting and fielding record at Alabama and was named to the All-SIAA team and every mythical All-America team college baseball had to offer. He batted over .300 but even more impressive was his defensive prowess at second base. He was also captain of the 1920 team.

After leading UA to the 1920 SIAA title, Sewell signed with Cleveland and played in New Orleans in the Southern League, leading them to the AA Championship. Sewell was then called up to the big leagues, where he replaced Ray Chapman, who was struck in the face and accidentally killed by a line drive, and became the Indians starting shortstop and helped the Indians to the 1920 World Series championship over the Brooklyn Nationals.

Sewell played 14 years in the big leagues for Cleveland and the New York Yankees, where he was Lou Gehrig's roommate. He batted .312 during his career as he amassed over 2,200 career hits. Sewell also set MLB records for fewest strikeouts in a season (4) and career (114)—records that will never be broken. He played on two World Series championship teams with Cleveland (1920) and New York Yankees (1932). He was inducted in the MLB Hall of Fame in 1977.

Sewell returned to Alabama in 1964, at the age of 65, to coach the Crimson Tide baseball team. He compiled a 106-79 (.603) overall record in five seasons. He was forced to retire after the 1969 season at the state mandatory retirement age of 70. He led the 1968 team to a 24-14 record and the Southeastern Conference championship. ■

THE NATURAL

Softball star Chrissy Owens from athletic family

Junior Alabama softball pitcher Chrissy Owens has followed in the footsteps of her older brother and sister with a successful college career. She has been extremely successful since coming to the Crimson Tide in 2004.

Owens, a native of Miami, Florida, has had an impact in different ways each year she has played for the Crimson Tide. Even though Chrissy's sister, Jennifer, decided to play closer at home at Florida International so she could play both softball and volleyball, Chrissy wanted to pursue bigger schools and play softball.

"It was pretty much known that I wasn't going to go to FIU," said Owens. "I was definitely looking at bigger schools. I wanted to go to a fairly good school for softball. If I wasn't an athlete I probably would have stayed home but considering that I put all of my time and effort into softball, I wanted to go and do something with it."

Chrissy first learned about Alabama when Tide Coach Patrick Murphy was recruiting Jackie Wilkins, who played with Chrissy's sister on a summer team. One of Chrissy's former teammates from her summer league team, Dominique Accetturo, was two years ahead of Owens and also signed to play for the Crimson Tide. All of that played in helping Chrissy with her decision to sign with Alabama.

In her freshman season, Chrissy came in with two very good starting pitchers already on the team in senior Jennifer Wright and junior Stephanie VanBrakle. Owens' role primarily was to come in to games late and try to shut the door on opponents' comeback attempts. She ended up posting a school record 11 saves, six more than any other



pitcher in school history had ever recorded. She appeared in 41 games with nine starts. She was 9-2 with a 1.03 earned run average (ERA) and 146 strikeouts.

"It was awesome coming in and having Jen Wright and Stephanie VanBrakle to look up to and learn from," said Owens. "I have learned so much from both of them. I think it was good for me. I gained experience and came back my sophomore year knowing more about the game. Not only pitching but knowing situations helped out a lot."

As a sophomore, Wright had graduated moving Chrissy into a starting role on the team. It was a role she quickly took advantage of and provided a legitimate threat when VanBrakle was not on the mound. Owens ended up second in the country with a 0.68 ERA, allowing just 15 earned runs in 154 innings. She went 21-5 for the season with seven shutouts and 190 strikeouts.

"I think my freshman year took a lot of pressure off coming in with more mature and experienced players ahead of me," said Owens. "It put me in a better mindset. Then last year was great because I still had Stephanie around. I got to pitch against some of the SEC teams so I knew what that was about. I learned so much the past two years. It helped me prepare for this year in order to come in here and do more."

The experience Owens gained her first two years has prepared her to become the ace of the pitching staff in 2007. She came in to the season ready to go and has put up some terrific numbers again this year to lead the squad. She ranks among the national and SEC leaders in several categories, including ERA, wins and shutouts.

"Working with Vann (Stuedemann) she gets better every day that I see her," said sophomore catcher Ashley Holcombe. "Especially coming back from not catching her all summer and starting fall practice, it seemed like she hadn't missed a beat. She was right where she was at during the World Series and was getting better every day."

Holcombe is one reason why Chrissy continues to improve and pitches with so much confidence. For the majority of her collegiate starts on the mound, Owens has

had Holcombe behind the plate.

"I know she is always going to do a good job," said Owens. "I try to do my best job for her. You get used to a certain catcher. You become comfortable and know her capabilities. I think she has helped me get better because the more comfortable we feel as pitchers the better we can perform."

Chrissy had tough acts to follow. Her older sister, Jennifer, was a standout softball and volleyball player at Florida International University while her older brother, Henry Jr., played catcher at Barry University in Florida.

Both of Owens' siblings have gone to play professionally in softball and baseball. Jennifer played one season with the Stratford Brakettes of the Amateur Softball Association. She played last season with the Connecticut Brakettes, an expansion team of the National Pro Fastpitch League. In college she was a two-sport star in softball and volleyball.

A two-year captain for the Golden Panthers' softball team she was all-time program leader in hits (267), batting average (.327), RBI (136), total bases (340) and doubles (35). She was named to the Sun Belt Conference's All-Time softball team, was the SBC Freshman of the Year and a four-time all-conference selection. In volleyball she holds the school record for block assists (346) and was second in career kills (1,325). She led FIU to the conference championship in 2001.

"She played third base and first a little in college," said Owens. "Last summer I think she played more first than third. She hasn't pitched since high school. She used to be a pitcher. She could hit though. She was a very good hitter."

Henry Jr. was drafted by the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2003 and has also spent time in the New York Mets minor league system, moving up through the minor leagues before making his Major League Baseball debut last season with the Mets. He is on the 40-man spring training roster with the Florida Marlins and is a leading candidate for the starting closer position.

"My brother wasn't always a standout baseball player," said Owens. "He did well as

a catcher and played well. He had a very good arm and the scouts saw that and wanted him to pitch. They asked him to pitch one day and after that they signed him as a free agent."

Chrissy says that her brother hadn't planned on playing professional baseball and was actually planning on attending medical school before the scouts noticed his strong arm and gave him a chance.

"He has always been more involved in academics," said Owens. "He was a very good student. He was always studying. That is all I can remember from him at college. Barry was a very good school and he was always locked up in his room studying for the MCAT or studying for class. He did very well. He wanted to go to medical school, but decided to put it on hold for professional baseball for a little while at least."

Chrissy and her brother and sister aren't the only members of the family involved in professional sports. Chrissy's aunt, Anna Marti, ran track at the University of Southern California and her uncle, Juan Bustabad, was drafted by the Boston Red Sox and is currently the manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers' Gulf Coast League affiliate.

"My family is pretty athletic," said Owens. "My mom's side of the family is very athletic. Her sister and her brothers all were athletic. My dad's family is also very athletic. My sister and my brother were very good athletes and still are."

With the remainder of this season and her entire senior year left to play, Owens says she hasn't really considered whether she would like to join her siblings and pursue a professional career after college.

"I have not thought too much about it," said Chrissy. "I don't know if it is something I would want to do. I haven't asked too many questions about it because I have been focusing on this season. I guess next year would be the year to start thinking about it."

One thing is for certain, as Owens continues to finish out her junior campaign and conclude her collegiate career next season, she will remain a force to be reckoned with for opponents. Her abilities on the mound give the Crimson Tide a chance to win every time she draws a start. ■

LIKE FATHERS?

Sons of former fine Tide players are prospects

Over the years, Alabama football has benefitted greatly from so-called legacy players, young men whose fathers played for the Crimson Tide. Herb Hannah was a great lineman for Bama in the early 1950s before going on to a professional career. His son, John, was a Crimson Tide All-American in the 1970s and has been considered to be the finest offensive lineman ever to play the game. A recent Alabama star was quarterback Brodie Croyle, the son of former Tide defensive end John Croyle. Current Alabama placekicker Leigh Tiffin's father was a legendary Crimson Tide three-point ace. There are dozens of such examples. And there could be more.

This year's prep senior class in the state of Alabama includes some young men whose fathers were outstanding Crimson Tide players. And these upcoming seniors with big names to live up to may have what it takes to be following in their fathers' footsteps at The Capstone.

Among the familiar names are Ogilvie, Neighbors, and Landrum.

One of Alabama's all-time favorite players under legendary Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant was running back Major Ogilvie. Major's son, Morgan, is an upcoming high school senior.

"I had some success in high school playing for championships, and I wanted to continue to play for championships at the next level," Major Ogilvie said. "Coach Bryant was a big reason for my wanting to play there. He was a big reason Alabama played for, and won national championships. I also had an uncle (Hayden Riley) who coached there."

Major Ogilvie passionately recalls his time at The University of Alabama, and the time spent on the gridiron.

"Gosh, we had so much fun," he said. "It was a fun time to be at The University. A couple of games that really stick out for me are the Arkansas and Penn State games (Sugar Bowl victories), winning two national championships with my teammates and Coach Bryant. There were so many big games, though. No one played in more big games than Alabama. That was part of the allure to play for Coach Bryant and The University of Alabama, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. We just had so much fun."

Everyone is aware of Bryant's reputation for being very tough on his players.

"Everything is relative with hard work and Coach Bryant," Ogilvie said. "If you want to be a winner you have to be mentally and physically tough. Coach Bryant demanded hard work, but it was always smart work. It all served a purpose, and I never felt



Major Ogilvie was Tide running star

University of Alabama

it was malicious in any way. You also knew he was doing it to help you on the field as well as in life. He was preparing us to become better people. There is no question about it, we worked hard.

"When I played in some all-star games after college, I was surprised to hear how differently some coaches did things compared to how we did them at Alabama; how easy some of the players had it in college."

Ogilvie talked of applying some of the life's lessons in the upbringing of his son Morgan.

Major said, "There were multiple things I have tried to instill in Morgan. A couple of those things are hard work and doing things the right way, on and off the field. I've always felt football was a huge confidence builder in young people," he said.

"It would mean a lot to me," Ogilvie said of his son having a chance to wear the Crimson jersey. "Alabama is my alma mater, and it would be great to see Morgan go there—not just for me, but for him. I would like Morgan to experience the same fun I did while I was there. But, at the same time Morgan has to do things that suit him. He has to carve his own path in life. Of course, I want him to be happy while he accomplishes his goals."

Ogilvie is now on another end of college football as he is involved with his son's recruitment.

"We just finished putting together a DVD of Morgan's junior season highlights," he said. "We plan to send that out to some schools. Morgan just got the results from his first attempt at the ACT, and he scored a 25. He also carries a 3.88 grade-point-average which should open up some opportunities for him.

"Morgan has only talked to Alabama at this time, but we expect to hear from some others after we get his film out there for the coaches to see."

Ogilvie is pleased with Alabama having landed Nick Saban as head coach.

"Oh, I'm very excited about Coach Saban," Ogilvie said. "I haven't had the opportunity to meet him yet, but I wrote him a letter telling him how happy we were to have him at Alabama.

"I was in Mississippi the day it became apparent he was going to be the next coach at Alabama. The first report was the press conference announcing him as the Alabama head coach would be Wednesday. I drove home, got up Wednesday and started to get ready to attend the press conference, and then I heard it was going to be Thursday. I had to be in San Antonio on Thursday, so I wasn't able to make it. I did call (Athletics Director) Mal Moore to congratulate him, and I asked him to relay to Coach Saban how happy we were to have him.

"I think he's going to do a good job, and I'm looking forward to it."

Major's son, Morgan, knows there can be pressure following in his father's footsteps.

"I believe I have a little added pressure because of the name and what my dad was able to accomplish," Morgan said, "but I focus on what I have to do and what my goals are."

As for playing for Alabama, Morgan said, "It would mean a great deal to me since my dad played there. The allure of The University, the tradition—it all plays a part in my wanting to play for Alabama. At the same time, I will play wherever I can."

Morgan will be a senior at Bessemer Academy. He's a 6-1, 185-pound quarterback who could play another skill position in college.

"I expect to play for the state championship again," he said. "We won it last year, and I believe we can win it again. My goal is to pass for more than 2,000 yards and 20 or more touchdowns."

In Huntsville there is an outstanding player who could be a third generation Crimson Tide.

"It was an honor to follow my dad to The University of Alabama," Wes Neighbors said from his Huntsville home. "Truthfully, I'm a bigger fan than I ever was a player. I really take it to heart. Our family is from the area, and The University is a big

part of our family.

"I felt a great sense of pride following my father to Alabama, in the school and the atmosphere there. It's like I stepped out of my body and lived a dream that I had to go to school and play football there. That was something I grew up dreaming about."

Wes' son, Wesley, is a rising senior at Huntsville High School. The proud father said, "Wesley is a great kid. He is a big kid too. He doesn't have the barrel chest like most of us Neighbors, but he's wide. He has his mother's stature. Wesley is 6-1, 198 [pounds]. He has gained eight pounds, but he is lean. He's about the same size (former linebacker and Tide teammate) Randy Rockwell was, but Wesley is fast," Wes said laughing.

"He (Wesley) has been getting a lot of interest from most of the schools in the SEC, all but Auburn. I don't know why Auburn hasn't shown any interest in Wesley," as he continued to laugh.

"Wesley has a couple of offers. One from Georgia Tech and one from Vandy (at this time), but he's going to take his time with his decision."

When asked if Wesley would have an interest in an offer from Alabama Wes Neighbors had this to say, "Oh yeah, he would love an offer from Alabama, but he has prepared himself for the possibility it might not happen. He understands how competitive it is to get an offer from Alabama."

The Neighbors family has grown up around the campus of Alabama, and they continue to support the program and attend games every year. Wes tells us about the fandom in the family.

"Wesley is probably the most obnoxious Alabama fan you'll ever meet," Wes said. "He and his sister are both obnoxious when it comes to Alabama. Of course, our entire family is Alabama."

Wesley met Tide Coach Nick Saban at Junior Day.

"We were at the Alabama-Auburn basketball game, and someone came to get Wesley and took him to meet coach Saban," his father said. "Coach Saban talked to Wesley about his plan for the program, then he asked Wesley if he had any questions. Wesley said, 'How are you feeling Coach? You look like you're tired.'

Wesley said, "My recruitment is going real good. I have offers from Georgia Tech and Vandy, and a lot of schools are showing interest in me."

"My personal favorites would probably be Alabama, Notre Dame, Clemson, LSU, Oklahoma, Georgia Tech and Florida. I really like those schools, but I'm keeping my options open for now. I don't want to rush into anything."

Wesley talks about the scholarship offers from Georgia Tech and Vanderbilt and explains what he likes about each school.

"I like their academics," he said. "Both institutions offer a good education in the fields I'm interested in. I'm thinking of three different fields right now—law, radiology and criminal justice. Education is going to play a big part in my decision."

Wesley Neighbors knows Alabama football history and tradition, certainly starting with his grandfather, Billy Neighbors, who was a part of the 1961 National Championship team and is still very much involved with The University. Ironically, his grandfather may have inadvertently opened up interest in a school that is not one of the favorites of



most Bama fans: Notre Dame.

Wesley said, "Before my granddad was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame he would have probably said, 'Hell, no, you aren't going there.' But, since we were up there for the induction ceremony, we toured the campus. He met some people up there. He hasn't said much about Notre Dame."

Wesley said an offer from Alabama "obviously would be special for me. I would be very interested. I've had four relatives play football there. My dad (Wes Neighbors), granddad (Billy Neighbors), my great uncle (Sidney Neighbors) and my uncle (Keith Neighbors)."

Wesley had just taken the ACT for the first time at the time of this interview. As we discussed his score it became obvious Wesley Neighbors holds himself to a high standard. Although he had a solid score, he said he had not studied for the exam or taken any classes prior to taking the test. He promises to take it again and improve.

Billy Neighbors, who was raised in Tuscaloosa County, was in Coach Bryant's first freshman class, following his brother Sidney to The Capstone. "I actually got there the same day he left," Billy said.

Regarding his Crimson Tide days, Billy said, "The best thing was going undefeated and winning the National Championship in 1961. I think that team still holds the record for fewest points allowed, or something like that. We never lost to Auburn while I was there. As a matter of fact, I don't think they scored a point against us in three years. One year they never crossed their own 40-yard line. Those were different times though, a different style of football. It's different today."

Billy Neighbors, while very proud of his accomplishments, has a different tone when he talks about the pride he felt as his sons played football for The University of Alabama.

"Oh, I was proud of them and still am. You know, Wes was recruited by Coach Bryant during his last year at Alabama. Wes never played for him, but Coach Bryant recruited him. Wes is probably one of the top five centers to ever play down there," Billy stated.

"Keith was recruited by Curry and played for Curry and Stallings before he injured his shoulder and had to stop playing. The doctors told him he couldn't play again. Keith didn't leave the team. He was a student assistant when they won the National Championship in '92 with Stallings. They were pretty good boys."

Billy Neighbors weighs in on his grandson Wes's ability, "First of all he's just a good kid. He has the instinct to play football. He'll play somewhere.

He is big, strong and fast. He knocked two kids out in the same game last year."

"He has everything it takes to play football. He can cover pretty well, and he's fast. Hell, our whole family can run. I ran a 4.7-40 when I was with Miami, and I weighed 272 pounds. I was over 30 years old too."

"My mother could run like a deer and kick a football 40 yards. That's the truth, she could."

Billy Neighbors spoke about the differences in the game today and when he played for Coach Bryant.

"We didn't have any limitations on scholarships, because then you could use scholarships for one sport to play football" he said. "I was never on a football scholarship. Coach Bryant had me on a track scholarship. A golf cart would come get me everyday and take me over to the track. I would throw the shot put, get back in the golf cart and go back to practice. It took about 10 or 15 minutes. I was always third (in track meets), because there were only three of us that threw the thing. There was 108 of us freshmen football players and only eight of us when we were seniors."

"Coach Bryant was a matter-of-fact man. You did things his way, or it was a fact you wouldn't be there. The stories about him being so tough aren't overrated, if anything he was tougher than that. You did things like he said do them."

As for football today, he said, "You know it ain't rocket science. If you can run and hit, you can play football. You have to have it in you to do that. Hell, I played with guys in the NFL that would run 40 yards out of the way to keep from getting hit. They looked good in shorts running the 40 yard dash, but they didn't last long once the pads went on. They didn't stay around long either. You have to want to hit people."

"These coaches today try to make it sound complicated. Some of them make it complicated, but if you have people that will hit you and can run to the ball they can play."

"Now some people have a natural ability to know where the ball is going before it ever happens. Wesley has that ability. He reads real well. Then you have some that are so much more talented they can overpower people to get to the ball. It's not that complicated."

"Wesley has the ability to do those things. He will play somewhere. I would like to see him play at Alabama."

As for Notre Dame, Billy said, "When I was inducted into college football's Hall of Fame we went up there (Notre Dame) and took a look at the campus and the school. It wouldn't bother me one bit if Wesley went there."

"Notre Dame has a tradition like Alabama. They have good academics and a good coach—a lot like Alabama does."

"Alabama has had a lot of coaches since Coach Bryant left—Perkins, Curry, Stallings. Sometimes I have a hard time naming all of them. I think Coach Saban will do a good job."

Anthony Landrum, running back from Sweet Water, is the son of Michael Landrum who played for Alabama in 1979 and transferred the next year to Southern Miss. Landrum played for the Golden Eagles in the 1982-83 seasons.

The younger Landrum has been successful on the gridiron racking up numerous accolades. His junior season (2006) brought such awards as Alabama Sports Writers Association (ASWA) first team All-State running back, ASWA Super 12 player, ASWA 1A Back of the Year finalist, Birmingham News first team All-State, Tuscaloosa News All-West Alabama, Tuscaloosa News Player of the Year, Southwest Alabama Offensive Player of the Year by the Clarke County Democrat, Demopolis Times Player of the Game against South Lamar and MVP of the Super Six. Landrum was also selected MVP of the Super Six his freshman season with a Super Six record-breaking four touchdown performance.

His career statistics, through his junior season, include rushing for 5,000 yards and 75 touchdowns. He rushed for 1,691 yards with 25 touchdowns and recorded 65 tackles on defense his junior season. Landrum holds scholarship offers from Southern Miss and Jacksonville State.

"I will hopefully play tailback at the next level," Anthony Landrum said. "That is what all the coaches are recruiting me for."

"I have always wanted to play at Alabama," Landrum said. "It would mean a lot to me to get a chance to play there. My dad played there, so I have wanted to go there since I was a little kid. I have wanted to go there my whole life."

Michael Landrum's brother (Anthony's uncle) Roosevelt Landrum said, "I remember some good finishes that Alabama had back when Coach Paul 'Bear' Bryant was there. They were the team back then. They beat people because they were supposed to, and because they were Alabama. When they

went on the field they did what they had to do because they expected to win, and they did."

Roosevelt talked about his brother, Michael, as the first black quarterback for The University of Alabama.

"We were all excited about that," he said. "We were excited about him getting the opportunity to play for The University of Alabama to start with. It wasn't for a while that we realized he was the first black quarterback to play for Alabama. That brought a lot of excitement to us. That is something that will not ever change. He will always be the first. That is something he is not really a stranger to because he and I were the first blacks to play at Sweet Water. That is special."

It is something of a mystery as to whether there may be another well-known name on Alabama's prospect list this year. Davin Palmer, the son of former wide receiver-kick return star David Palmer, had his moments for Chelsea High School last year, but reportedly ran afoul of team rules. It remains to be seen if he'll be playing.

Legacy players aren't always in the same sport. Alabama's outstanding golf team this year features Gator Todd, the son of former Crimson Tide quarterback Richard Todd.

And one of the top linemen in Tennessee is the son of a former Alabama basketball player.

Barrett Jones from Cordova Evangelical Christian has received several SEC scholarship offers and has taken two recent SEC visits. He said, "I have offers from Alabama, Auburn, Tennessee, Ole Miss, Arkansas and Vanderbilt. I am receiving strong interest from North Carolina and Virginia as well. I get mail from a lot of other schools, but those

are really the main schools talking to me."

"I really don't have any favorites. I have been to Alabama and Auburn's Junior Day. I am going to Tennessee for their Orange and White game."

Jones said his visit to Alabama "went great. It was based around the Alabama-Auburn basketball game. We ate and talked to all the coaches. I was able to speak to Coach Saban."

"Coach Saban laid out his goals for Alabama. He told me about the direction he wants to take the program. He talked to me about helping me succeed not only in the program, but in life as well. I think Coach Saban really has things going in the right direction for Alabama."

"I like the coaches a lot. They are really great. It's only three and a half hours away from my house opposed to some of the other schools I am considering. I have been an Alabama fan my whole life. My dad (Rex Jones) went to Alabama and played basketball there. I know a lot of people there as well."

The big lineman (6-5, 260 pounds) knows what he is seeking in his college choice.

"I am really looking for the school where I feel the most comfortable," Jones said. "I want to go somewhere I can succeed in football and in school. I want to go somewhere there are kids like me who I can hang out with. I think the people there are the most important thing because you are going to spend a lot of time with them."

Jones missed half of his junior season due to a torn labrum in his shoulder. His surgery was performed by Dr. James Andrews in Birmingham, and Jones has fully recovered. ■

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FOOTBALL HOT LIST

Alabama's coaching staff has begun the process of recruiting of 2007 high school senior stars. Here are some who could end up on the final Crimson Tide recruiting list, and, of course, there will be others making that roster.

Name	Pos.	Hgt.	Wgt.	40-time	Hometown (High School)
Michael Abernathy	FB	5-11	235	4.5	Russellville
Ken Adams	TE	6-5	215	N/A	Enterprise
Justin Albert	RB	5-8	170	4.45	Prattville
Darrius Barksdale	S	6-1	188	N/A	Batesville, Miss. (South Panola)
T.J. Barnes	OT	6-6	320	N/A	Enterprise
Mark Barron	WR	6-2	205	4.5	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Andre Berry	WR	6-3	195	N/A	Tarrant
*Undra Billingsley	TE	6-3	245	N/A	Birmingham (Woodlawn)
Devonta Bolton	WR	6-4	210	4.5	Norcross, Ga.
John Michael Boswell	OL	6-5	290	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Tuscaloosa County)
Matt Branch	TE	6-6	240	4.8	Sterlington, La.
Xzavian Brandon	WR	6-3	175	N/A	Duluth, Ga. (Northview)
James Brown	DT	6-1	285	N/A	Cottondale (Paul W. Bryant)
Justin Brown	WR	5-9	152	N/A	Athens
T.J. Bryant	CB	6-0	175	N/A	Tallahassee, Fla. (Lincoln)
Jarrett Burns	QB	6-3	185	N/A	Huntsville (Lee)
Ronald Byrd	OT	6-5	246	5.29	Hogansville, Ga. (Callaway)
Scott Byrd	DT	6-2	250	4.9	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Jermie Calhoun	RB	6-0	195	4.5	Van, Texas
Kendrick Cook	TE	6-3	230	N/A	Attalla (Etowah)
Alex Davis	DE	6-3	236	4.7	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Peters Drey	OT	6-5	280	N/A	Mobile (McGill-Toolen)
Teavis Durgin	OT	6-6	295	N/A	Daphne
Dee Finley	S	6-3	198	N/A	Auburn
British Footman	RB	5-11	178	4.5	Tallahassee, Fla. (Godby)
Daniel Forester	DE	6-4	240	N/A	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
LaFrazier Frost	CB	5-10	175	N/A	Mobile (B.C. Rain)
Blaine Gabbert	QB	6-4	225	4.65	Ballwin, Mo. (Parkway West)
Matthew Gordon	WR	6-0	185	4.55	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
William Green	DE	6-5	208	N/A	Birmingham (Spain Park)
Cordian Hagans	DT	6-5	265	N/A	Duluth, Ga. (Northview)
Devon Hairston	S	6-1	175	N/A	Enterprise
Glenn Harbin	DE	6-5	230	N/A	Mobile (McGill-Toolen)
Templeton Hardy	DT	6-4	280	N/A	Sardis, Miss. (North Panola)
Jacory Harris	QB	6-3	175	4.8	Miami, Fla. (Northwestern)
Jarrell Harris	LB	6-3	208	4.5	Gadsden (Gadsden City)
Chris Hood	QB	6-1	190	N/A	Birmingham (Huffman)
Destin Hood	WR	6-2	182	4.5	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Reggie Hunt	RB	5-8	180	4.4	Daphne
David Isabelle	QB	6-3	180	N/A	Huntsville (Johnson)
Terrell Jackson	LB	6-1	190	N/A	Prattville
Josh Jarboe	WR	6-3	195	4.45	Ellenwood, Ga. (Cedar Grove)
D.C. Jefferson	QB	6-6	225	N/A	Winter Haven, Fla.
Eric Jones	OT	6-6	275	N/A	Birmingham (Spain Park)
Julio Jones	WR	6-4	212	4.5	Foley
Anthony Landrum	RB	6-1	205	4.6	Sweet Water
*Brandon Lewis	DE	6-3	260	N/A	Pleasant Grove
Tyler Love	OL	6-7	270	N/A	Birmingham (Mountain Brook)

Chris Martin	DT	6-5	290	N/A	Ft. Walton Bch, Fla. (Choctowhatchee)
*Ivan Matchett	RB	5-10	205	4.6	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Antoine McClain	OT	6-6	313	N/A	Anniston
Greg McGruer	OT	6-8	350	5.4	Birmingham (Huffman)
Caleb Mitchell	CB	6-0	175	4.4	Russellville
Dekendrick Moncrief	WR	6-0	175	N/A	Prattville
Darius Morgan	WR	6-4	180	N/A	Citra, Fla. (Marion)
Wesley Neighbors	S	6-2	195	4.55	Huntsville
Morgan Ogilvie	QB	6-1	185	4.7	Birmingham (Bessemer Academy)
Jonathan Owens	OG	6-3	285	N/A	Blountsville (Susan Moore)
Davin Palmer	RB	5-7	160	4.45	Chelsea
Matt Patchan	OT	6-6	250	N/A	Tampa, Fla. (Freedom)
Quinton Pierce	WR	6-2	185	4.5	Mobile (Davidson)
DaMario Pippen	RB	5-10	185	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)
Lavanda Powe	DT	6-5	225	N/A	Silas (Southern Choctaw)
*Jermaine Preyear	RB	5-11	195	N/A	Mobile (Davidson)
Spencer Pybus	LB	6-1	200	N/A	Dothan (Northview)
Darrell Reynolds	CB	5-10	180	N/A	Brundidge (Pike County)
Jeremy Rice	RB	5-8	185	4.54	Madison (Madison Academy)
Gerell Robinson	WR	6-4	225	4.6	Chandler, Ariz. (Hamilton)
Chaz Rogers	QB	6-2	200	N/A	Guntersville
Justin Rogers	RB	5-11	180	4.5	Vestavia Hills
Quinn Sanford	OL	6-3	295	N/A	Batesville, Miss. (South Panola)
Jomarcus Savage	DT	6-2	260	N/A	Huntsville (Johnson)
Burton Scott	WR	5-10	190	4.4	Prichard (Vigor)
James Searcy	DE	6-2	220	4.65	Newnan, Ga. (Northgate)
Darrell Simmons	S	6-4	201	4.65	College Park, Ga. (Banneker)
Jamoris Slaughter	S-WR	6-1	170	N/A	Tucker, Ga.
Brad Smalley	QB	6-3	215	N/A	Tuscaloosa (American Christian)
*Corey Smith	K	6-0	190	N/A	Bunker Hill, W. Va. (Musselman)
David Spurlock	DL	6-5	290	N/A	Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Riverdale)
Korey Suggs	LB	6-1	210	N/A	Russellville
Josh Tatum	OG	6-5	295	N/A	Marbury
Cooper Taylor	WR	6-3	164	4.49	Atlanta (Marist)
Demetrius Thomas	RB	6-1	200	N/A	Theodore
Jacoby Thomas	LB	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mobile (Murphy)
Johnny Thompson	LB	6-1	205	4.6	Fairfax (Valley)
Lavertis Towns	LB	6-2	210	N/A	Dora
Barrett Trotter	QB	6-2	195	4.6	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Justin Tuggle	QB	6-3	195	4.79	Duluth, Ga. (Northview)
Marcus Udell	CB	5-11	180	N/A	Tallahassee, Fla. (Copiah-Lincoln JC)
Demarkus Underwood	DT	6-5	295	N/A	Leighton (Colbert County)
Courtney Upshaw	DE	6-2	225	N/A	Eufaula
Lemanski Ware	LB	6-2	205	N/A	Lanett
Louis Watson	CB	5-10	165	4.47	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Richard Watson	RB	6-1	220	4.6	Tallahassee, Fla. (A&M University)
Coley White	QB	6-1	170	N/A	Daphne
Marsellos Wilder	WR	6-2	190	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)
Rodriguez Wilks	WR	6-1	196	4.56	Smyrna, Tenn.
Branden Williams	S	5-10	185	4.55	Phenix City (Russell County)
DeMario Williams	WR	6-3	182	4.55	Columbia, Tenn. (Central)
Jeremy Williams	QB	6-0	200	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)
*Michael Williams	DE	6-6	240	4.7	Reform (Pickens County)
Jamie Womack	LB	6-1	210	N/A	Ozark (Carroll)
Lemarcus Wright	WR	6-2	210	N/A	Lanett

*Committed to Alabama

ONES WHO GOT AWAY

Alabama football recruiting missed on a few

When new Alabama Coach Nick Saban talked about recruiting, he noted that the chances of getting the players needed improve with more names on the board. As an example, he said if a team needs to sign two guards, it will have a better chance of filling that need if it is recruiting eight players than if recruiting five.

But at the end of the recruiting season, a team that has recruited more players is going to have more so-called "losses." But that may be more perception than reality. One can't lose what one doesn't have, and even commitments are not in the bag. Additionally, sometimes a player who is on the recruiting board in May is not regarded as a prospect in November.

When Saban replaced Mike Shula as Crimson Tide coach, it appears there was an adjustment in the Bama recruiting wish list. Alabama did lose four verbal commitments. But those appear to fall into the category of Alabama's needs changing more than those players "getting away."

And Saban warned that if prospects who were committed shopped around that he and his staff would also shop for replacements.

The most notable of the "lost" prospects was quarterback Robert Marve from Plant High School in Tampa, Florida. Marve had been lightly regarded. Shula saw Marve in Bama's camp last summer and offered the youngster a scholarship. He accepted the offer, committing to Alabama, but really more committed to Shula. When Shula was fired, Marve clearly had second thoughts about Bama. And because he had an exceptional senior season, earning Florida's Mr. Football award, he had many more offers.

As if he didn't have enough reasons to reconsider the Alabama scholarship, Saban gave him a big one. Saban and Offensive Coordinator Major Applewhite had their eyes on quarterback Nick Fanuzzi from San



Robert Marve



Sidell Corley

Antonio, Texas. Fanuzzi, a U.S. Army All-American, made an official visit to Alabama. He had been committed to Miami, but changed his commitment to Bama.

Marve said he had been led to believe Alabama would not sign another quarterback and within two weeks took the quarterback scholarship Fanuzzi had eschewed from Miami.

Three other players had committed to Alabama, but did not sign with the Crimson Tide.

Another Sunshine State product who decommitted was cornerback Sherod Murdock from Tampa Middleton. Murdock quickly reopened his recruitment once Shula was fired and the new Tide coaching staff did not show much attention. He considered Kansas, South Carolina and Pittsburgh. Murdock committed to Pittsburgh when former Alabama secondary coach Chris Ball accepted a job with the Panthers. Ball had been recruiting Murdock.

LaMarcus Williams, from Bastrop, Louisiana, committed to Alabama last summer and continued to remain solid with his verbal pledge after Shula left Tuscaloosa. But Williams took an official visit to Ole Miss in January, and the Rebels were on the verge of landing his commitment. The big defensive tackle received in-home visits from Ole Miss and Mississippi State the same day, and in complete surprise signed with the Bulldogs on national signing day. Saban's attention was closer to home, focused on Hoover defensive tackle Josh Chapman. Chapman had received a grayshirt offer from Shula. The new staff

thought more of Chapman and offered the Auburn commitment a full scholarship. Chapman made the switch to Alabama a couple of days before national signing day.

Kourtnei Brown, defensive end from Charlotte (North Carolina) Victory Christian, gave his verbal pledge to Bama following his outstanding summer camp performance and an offer to play for the Tide. He re-opened his recruitment once Shula was fired, but reaffirmed his decision for Alabama during his official visit to Tuscaloosa in January. But then Brown visited Clemson and North Carolina. Brown liked all schools he visited, and the Tar Heels appeared as the frontrunner for his signature, but Clemson received his last visit and his signature on national signing day.

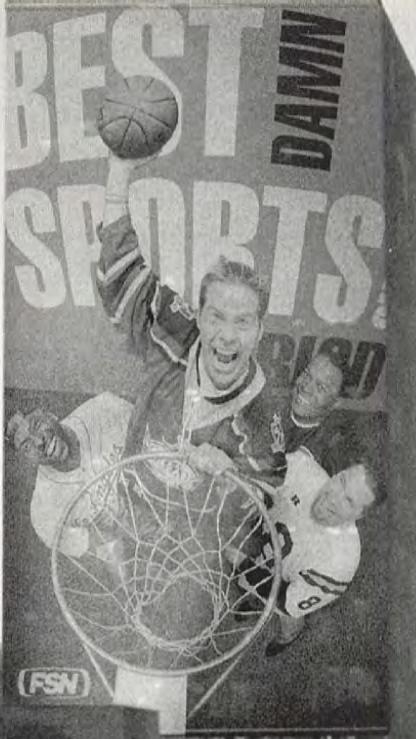
Year-in and year-out, Alabama is going to be mentioned with a lot of prospects because it is prestigious for a player to say that he is considering (and being considered by) the Crimson Tide. That also means the likelihood of some high profile "losses."

Golden Tate is an outstanding wide receiver from Hendersonville, Tennessee. But when the John Paul II High star got an offer from Notre Dame, Alabama was out of the running.

Allen Bailey, a defensive end from Darien, Georgia, seemed to be deciding among Alabama, Georgia and Florida State, but signed with Miami.

It was hardly a surprise that John Brown, a defensive tackle from Lakeland, Florida, picked the Gators over Alabama. Florida signed a number of Brown's teammates.

One of the big "losses" is the type that Saban will be attempting to eliminate. Sidell Corley, a defensive end from McGill-Toolen in Mobile, was among the very best prospects in the state of Alabama. Corley committed to Florida, then re-opened his recruitment, and he signed with LSU. ■



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Weeknights

FSN

HERE'S TO SUCCESS

Of Alabama's three signees for the current men's basketball recruiting season, 6-foot-2 Senario Hillman of Irwinton, Georgia, has drawn the most raves. One former Southeastern Conference player compares Hillman to former Bama great James "Hollywood" Robinson. That's rarified air, but according to a pair of prep writers in Georgia, Hillman may be able to back it up.

"It's not often a basketball player will go between his legs with the ball, while flying through the air to dunk during a game—especially a high school game," wrote Matthew Caldwell of the Union-Recorder, "but with 3:40 to go in the fourth quarter, Wilcox Warrior Senario Hillman did just that." Ross Couch of the same publication said in a later story about a game against GMC Prep that "Hillman started the second frame in spectacular fashion, slamming his second dunk home over the top of a defender. Five Wilco points later, he dunked again." Hillman has averaged 26 points per game while leading Wilkinson County to the Class A Final Four, where the Warriors defeated Whitefield Academy 79-75 in overtime to claim the state title. Hillman was held to 13 in that game, and fouled out in regulation after missing a dunk and two free throws late in the fourth quarter. He showed great leaping ability during that contest with an array of drives and dunks, however.

Another athletic future backcourt Tide is Decatur's Rico Pickett, a 6-4 jumping jack of a point guard who took the Red Raiders to the Alabama 5A Final Four, and scored 19 points in a four-point loss to John Carroll in the semifinals. Pickett finished his final season in the River City with a 19.5 point average, and handed out eight assists while snaring five boards per contest.

Pickett scored a North Regional record 42 points to help the Raiders advance to Birmingham. Asked how he'd like one of Decatur's finest teams at 27-6 to be

remembered, Pickett said, "I just want people to say we played hard and gave it all we had."

John Carroll coach Marty Smith told Pickett after the game to turn to ex-Cavalier Ron Steele for advice next year. "I told him, 'Rico, you and Ronald are going to make a great pair next year,'" said Smith. Pickett was named state 5A Player of the Year by the Birmingham Tip-off Club and will play in Chicago's prestigious Roundball Classic later this year.

With the loss of 6-foot-10 senior starter Jermareo Davidson, playing time in the post will be available next year in Tuscaloosa. Justin Knox, a 6-9 signee from Tuscaloosa's Central High, hopes to garner some of those minutes. Knox helped lead his Falcons to the Alabama Final Four with senior year averages of 15.6 points to go with 16.2 boards. Much like ex-Tide Roy Rogers, Knox is an accomplished shot-blocker.

Knox was named MVP of the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star game as he scored 22 points and had seven rebounds.

(Knox has a teammate who may walk on at Bama. Daniel Scott, the starting point guard for Central, is the son of the late Bama star and coach Robert, "Rah-Rah" Scott, and the younger Scott qualifies for a the scholarship named in his dad's honor. Scott averaged 10.6 points and five assists per game.)

There is another Steele suiting up for Smith and John Carroll, 6-foot-3 Andrew, Ron's younger brother. Andrew, one of Alabama's top juniors, averaged 16 points per game for the 5A runnerup Cavaliers. Alabama is very interested, but so is Kansas; and Clemson has offered the John Carroll quarterback/guard the opportunity to play football and basketball in the ACC.

Perhaps the most explosive member of the Alabama high school class of 2008 is R.C. Hatch guard Frankie Sullivan. The 6-2 Sullivan averaged 26 points, 5.5 assists, and 5.5 rebounds in two Final Four games to lead the Bobcats to the 2A state title. He averaged 23 points for the season. Auburn and Mississippi

Recruiting is key to winning Bama basketball

State are top contenders for Sullivan's services, but Alabama is well aware of the young man who attends the same school that produced former Tide great Erwin Dudley.

One man the UA staff has zeroed its sights on is 6-foot-8 power forward JaMychal Green of Montgomery's St. Jude High. Green led his team to the 1A finals but the Pirates failed in their attempt to three-peat. Green is a force around the basket, as shown by his averages of 23 points and 15 boards. The competition for Green's services will be stiff but Montgomery native and Tide assistant Phillip Pearson has been on Green for over two years, so Bama will be a factor.

Dothan Northview's 6-foot-9, 205 pound Antonio Gibson reminds some who've watched him play of ex-Bama and current San Antonio Spur Robert Horry Gibson broke a hand and only played four games last season, but the national recruit averaged 16 points and seven boards per contest as a sophomore. He is expected to return at full strength for the summer AAU season. Florida State is among the many teams the Tide will compete with for Gibson, but he has visited several Tide games over the past couple of years.

There is one more 11th-grader who may get consideration for a Tide offer, but he has to be considered a "project" at this point. That would be 6-foot-11, 250-pound Bawa Muniru, who has helped Madison Academy to a pair of state titles. Muniru averaged 14.6 boards. Like Knox, he is an accomplished shot-blocker but Muniru needs much work on the offensive end. Still, his size will attract lots of schools, and there is the possibility that the Tide could be among his suitors.

One excellent junior from Mobile won't be displaying his talents in Tuscaloosa, as 6-5 Nick Williams of LeFlore High School is already verbally committed to Tom Crean and the Marquette Warriors. Williams averaged 16 points in leading the Rattlers to the 5A crown. ■

MORE FOOTBALL SIGNNEES

Although in Alabama it's known as soccer

The first Wednesday in February is known to college sports fans as Signing Day, with approximately 99.9 per cent of those sports followers thinking "Football." In most of the world, Signing Day is unknown and "Football" is the sport we call soccer.

The connection is that the first Wednesday in February is also signing day for soccer, and in the case of the Alabama Crimson Tide, the women's soccer team of Coach Don Staley.

This year Staley added eight new signees, and another 10 athletes are expected to participate as new members of Bama's soccer team as fall walk-ons.

"This recruiting class caps off a significant amount of hard work by our coaching staff," Staley said. "I feel that we have addressed not only individual needs but depth, an area that hurt us last season. This class should help propel us into a successful 2007 season."

The Tide played the better part of the 2006 with injured players and other players out of their natural position due to injuries. Alabama's effort in this recruiting class should alleviate that problem.

Here is a look at Bama's new soccer signees:

Jessie Allaway won't be the first in her family to perform for the Crimson Tide. Her sister, Katie, is a sophomore on Alabama's rowing team. She comes from an athletic family as another sister, Betsy, is a softball pitcher at Princeton. Allaway, 5-9, is a sweeper at Tuscaloosa Northridge. She has played soccer since she was six and joined her first club team at age eight. Last fall she played for the Vestavia Attack 89 Black club team.

Justine Bernier is a goalkeeper from Ontario, Canada. The 5-10 keeper is currently a member of the U-18 Canadian National Team and the Toronto Lady Lynx in the W-League, where she was the 2006 Goalkeeper of the Year and first team All-W-League. The W-League is a mixture of professional and amateur athletes and is considered the highest ranking league available for women.

Bernier has previously played for the U-17 Canadian National Team, U-16 Canadian National Team, and the St. Catharines Jets. Current Alabama players Haley MacDonald and Rosaly Petriello also played for the Jets where they were coached by Jim Craig and his staff. She is a member of the National Training Centre of Ontario, Ontario U-16 Provincial Team, and the Ontario Canada Games team. She earned a gold medal at the T. Dunleavy Tournament of Champions, a silver at the U-17 & U-21 Ontario Cup, and a bronze at the Canada Games.

Two weeks after "Signing Day," Staley announced that Justine's sister, junior sweeper

Danielle Bernier, will transfer to the Crimson Tide for the 2007 season. "In my opinion Danielle is the last piece of the puzzle for the 2007 recruiting class," Staley said. "She brings a great deal of experience to the back line and I am expecting big things from her for the next two years." Bernier will transfer to the Tide after spending the last two seasons playing for Canisius College in Buffalo. With the Golden Griffins she was a two year starter at sweeper, 2005 Rookie of the Year and 2006 MAAC All-Academic Team. Danielle also played for the St. Catharines Jets club team. In addition she has also played for the Oakville Cobras, the gold medal winning Ontario All Stars, Ontario Provincial U15 team, Ontario Provincial U14 team and the Peel-Halton Regional team.

The Tide signed three midfielders: Victoria Fredrick, Kelly King, and Carly Mygrants.

Fredrick is a native of Huntsville and played for the Vestavia Attack Club Team under Coach Jason Lockhart. She has also been a member of the Olympic Development Program (ODP) state team from 2002-06, Lady Raptors club team and the North Alabama Untied Samba club team. She won three state championships with the Lady Raptors and two state championships with the Samba. Fredrick was named to both the All-State team and the Huntsville Times All-Metro Team on two occasions under coach Henry Mpagi.

King is a midfielder from Mooreville, North Carolina. She is three time all-conference and all-region performer at Lake Norman High School, where she was coached by Dane Perry. She is also a member of the 2004 North Carolina champion Charlotte Soccer Blue club team and the Greensboro Twisters Club which is coached by Chris Brewer and the legendary coach Rich Winslow. King was the starting midfielder for the state Select ODP team from 2002-2006.

Mygrants plays at Archbishop Alter High School in Kettering, Ohio. where she was a NSCAA All-America, all-region team, tall-conference, Conference Player of the Year, and two time all-state. She was also a member of the Cincinnati United Premier White club team, where she won the Buckeye Premier League Championship, OSYSA State Cup Championship and the Midwest National League Championship.

Brooke Rodgers is a forward in the 2007 signing class. She attended Indian Hills High School in Cincinnati where she was all-state, all-region team, NSCAA Scholar All-America, and three time all-conference. She was also a member of the Cincinnati United Premier club

with Alabama signee Carly Mygrants which was coached by Jim Calder.

The Tide signed one defender in Sydney Barker, a native of Roswell, Georgia. She was a defensive specialist for the nationally ranked Tophat Gold club team under Coach Todd Schulenberger. Barker is a dual sport athlete. She is the daughter of Leo Barker, a former NFL linebacker for the Cincinnati Bengals.

"With the large number of skill position players we have in this signing class, along with the development of the squad that we currently have that gives us reason for excitement about the upcoming season," Staley said.

Staley also anticipates as many as ten walk on players to make the Tide team this fall. Those players will be announced once they have enrolled at The University.

In addition to the 2007 additions the Tide will return 15 players who saw significant action last season and regain three players who received medical redshirts after missing the 2006 season.

Alabama is also adding a new player to the Crimson Tide men's tennis team. Donald "Trey" Walston, a senior from Mountain Brook High School in Birmingham, announced his commitment to play tennis for Bama.

"Trey is a great addition to our squad for the 2007-2008 year," said Coach Billy Pate. "Clearly, he's one of, if not the top player in the state for his age division as well as one of the top players in the South throughout his junior career. He is very committed to being a top collegiate player and has the potential to have a very aggressive game style as he continues to develop physically. He carries himself well on the court and offers the type of character we are looking for in our program."

Ranked as the top junior player in Alabama, Walston finished in the top 20 in the South in every age division as well as represented Alabama in the Davis Cup for five years. In addition, Walston represented the Southern section of the United States for five years at the U.S. Zonals and played for two years at USTA National Boys Championships in Kalamazoo, Michigan. In high school, Walston won an individual state title as a ninth grader and helped Mountain Brook to a 6A team state championship.

"Playing for Alabama has been a lifelong dream," said Walston. "I wanted to play for Coach Pate and Coach Nickell (Assistant Coach Lee Nickell) and I like all the players on the team. My goal is to help Alabama win an SEC championship while I am here."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Sugar Bowl play still Teague's defining moment

It has been 14 years now, and Lamar Thomas is probably still sneaking a peek over his shoulder. After what George Teague did to Thomas and the Miami Hurricanes on the evening of January 1, 1993, in the Superdome in New Orleans, who could blame him?

In the Sugar Bowl it was number one-ranked and heavily-favored Miami taking on number two Alabama. In the third quarter, Thomas, the mouthiest of Miami's talented wide receivers, was in the midst of a pride-swallowing evening. He had caught four short passes, fumbling away one, and had no touchdowns.

But with nine minutes left in the third quarter and the Hurricanes facing a second-and-10 from their own 11, Thomas finally became... well, Thomas. He used a deft hip fake to blow past Alabama cornerback Willie Gaston along the left sideline and then at the Miami 36 beautifully hauled in a perfectly thrown ball from quarterback Gino Torretta. There was no defender around him and only open artificial turf in front of him. In other words, Thomas, owner of 4.5 speed in the 40 and a member of Miami's 400-meter relay team, was gone. Sayonara. Play over. Six points. Bama's defense had been burned. Make it 27-12 with the extra-point to make it 27-13.

Or maybe not.

What Thomas and 76,789 Superdome spectators and the other millions of people watching on television were unable to see was what was going on inside the mind of Teague, Alabama's All-Southeastern Conference senior cornerback.

"I can tell you what was going through my mind, and it was in big bold letters, said the now 36-year-old Teague while staring at a photograph of the play in his office in Texas.

"FEAR."

"I knew I didn't want to have to go to the sidelines after Lamar's touchdown and face Coach (Gene) Stallings. I was out of position on the play and was loafing a bit."

So Teague, looking like a crimson blur, took off after Thomas and, to the amazement of everyone watching, began quickly closing the gap.

"I chased him out of panic," Teague said. "The thing is, you get faster and stronger when you're scared."

Teague eventually caught Thomas at the Alabama 15. Then the 6-foot-2, 187-pounder attempted to do what most would consider unthinkable — forgo making the sure tackle to save a touchdown and instead go for the ball from behind. And in front of millions of



dumbfounded observers, Teague did just that, reaching over Thomas' right shoulder, stripping the ball loose, muscling it up Thomas' back, grabbing hold of it and then running back the other direction with it.

"First, I wanted to catch Lamar; second, I wanted to strip the ball; and next, it was, 'Oh, look at the present I got here,'" Teague said.

Sports Illustrated writer Austin Murphy called it the "transcendent play of the season." In fact, it was a non-play. Alabama had jumped offsides at the snap, and the Hurricanes were able to accept that penalty and retain the ball. But had Teague not done what he did, the Hurricanes would have declined the penalty and taken Thomas' would-be touchdown. So while the play didn't count on the statistics sheet, it certainly counted in every other way.

It also counted in Teague's life, impacting him in a bigger way than even he imagined and securing his permanent spot in Alabama football lore. Today, every Alabama football fan either saw the play live, saw a replay, or has heard or read about it in some fashion or another.

"I didn't realize how big a play that was until after the game when it was all over the news and then people wanted to do a painting of it," Teague said. "It's absolutely incredible to me that the play happened 14 years ago, and it's still talked about like it was just a couple of years ago. The way I look at it, I was just doing my job when I did what I did, but it turned out to be a lot more glamorous than that. It's still something people remember me for, and it's something my

family and I can be proud of. It's definitely good to be remembered for something like that rather than something negative."

For Thomas, though, the memory is a negative one.

"It took Lamar years before he would talk to me, and it wasn't until we played together with the Miami Dolphins in 1997 that we had our first conversation with each other," Teague said. "The rough part was that in being teammates he had to relive the whole thing again. For instance, when I signed with Miami, the Miami Herald didn't run a photo of me from the NFL, it ran the photo of me chasing down Lamar in the Sugar Bowl. And in the locker room, guys would kid Lamar and say things to him like, 'Watch out, here comes Teague.' It was an awkward situation, but we did the best we could because we were teammates."

If it's not Teague bearing down on Thomas, the other indelible image of Teague in a crimson jersey is that of him high-stepping into the end zone after picking off a Toretta pass. That play, which came earlier in the third quarter of that Sugar Bowl, broke open the contest, giving the Tide a 27-6 advantage.

"We knew exactly what their play was, and we knew exactly what they were going to do," Teague said. "We were in man coverage, and I was on the slot receiver (Jonathan Harris). They snapped the ball, and I went off my hunch, stepped up and when I looked up the ball was already in the air and came right to me. I just wanted to get to the sideline and outrun Gino to the end zone."

It was Teague's first interception returned for a touchdown of his Alabama career.

"That to me was more gratifying as a defensive back (than chasing down Thomas)," Teague said. "Getting an interception and taking it back for a touchdown was huge, huge, huge for me."

It is understandable that Teague forgot a pre-game plan.

"With Toretta having won the Heisman Trophy, I had planned on striking the Heisman pose if I were to score," Teague said. "But after I scored, my teammates and I all got to celebrating and I forgot to do it. Then, once I got to the bench, I thought, 'Man, I didn't do the Heisman pose.'"

While those two plays will forever be linked with George Teague the Alabama standout, one other play—though it really wasn't a play—will be the legacy of George Teague the NFL standout. In September 2000, Teague and his fellow Dallas Cowboys were hosting San Francisco. Terrell Owens, then a 49ers player, caught two touchdowns that day, and after each score the

brash receiver trotted to midfield and celebrated on the Cowboys' star logo. During his second go-around of denigrating the logo, an infuriated Teague blindsided him from behind, decking Owens and sending him sprawling to the turf.

The act earned Teague two things: immediate ejection from the game and immediate hero status in the eyes of Cowboys fans and others who saw Owens as a flamboyant ego-maniac who was in dire need of humbling. Teague, now the athletics director and head football coach at Harvest Christian Academy in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, admits the Terrell Owens incident, because it's more recent and because it occurred in the state of Texas, is remembered more than what he did at Alabama by the youth he works with today.

Which means he has a little more explaining to do.

"Like the high-stepping thing, this was another spontaneous deal," Teague said. "We were losing, and Terrell and I had already been talking some trash to each other prior to his second touchdown. So for me, it was just a matter of frustration and anger kicking in all at once and leading me to do what I did. I tell kids today not to let their emotions get to that point. Fortunately, it turned out to be a positive for me personally, but at the time it happened I had teammates telling me, 'You're in front of 70,000 people and you just flipped out.' I tell kids now not to do that."

So what's it like for Teague seeing Owens suit up for the Cowboys today? Understandably, he's not too thrilled about it.

"I know decisions have to be made for the good of the team and to help the team win games, but it's still weird seeing him put on that star after all that came down," he said.

Teague was originally drafted in the NFL by the Green Bay Packers, going in the first round in the 1993 draft. He spent three seasons in the frozen tundra before being traded to the Cowboys in 1996 and then to Miami in 1997. He returned to Dallas in 1998, eventually retiring after the 2001 season.

"The average career span for a defensive back in the NFL is three-and-a-half seasons, and my goal was to play seven," Teague said. "I ended up playing nine, so I'm very happy. I never won a Super Bowl, but I got to travel around and see and experience lots of things. Outside of the trades and cuts, it was a very good career for me. I was able to finish on my own terms without someone else telling me it was over."

Teague has spent the last three years at Harvest Christian Academy, a private school in Watauga, Texas. His son, James Teague II, started attending the school in 2000, so Teague had a tie-in with the school even before he retired. So when the head football coach/assistant athletics director job opened up in 2004, Teague was offered the position and accepted. He was promoted to full-time athletics director a year later.

"I've had a blast," Teague said of his job. "I love it. The two career fields I thought about getting into after football were broadcasting and



University of Alabama

coaching. After I did a coaching internship with the Cleveland Browns I decided I wanted to be a coach."

What Teague loves most about his job is the opportunity he has to positively affect young people.

"I try to get across to the kids that people respect you for your character," Teague said. "The character you show outweighs any championship rings you might possess. Those rings perish after a while, but people will remember how you treat them."

He also preaches the importance of hard work and being ready to perform when your opportunity arises.

"You don't know when it's going to be your turn to shine," he said. "That day against Miami, it was my turn. You just have to be persistent and stay coachable. Every fine detail you've been taught over your whole life can come to a head in one single moment. I went through years and years of going through stripping-the-ball drills and drills that taught you to run to the nearest sideline after intercepting a pass, and it all came to fruition for me in the Sugar Bowl."

Outside his responsibilities at Harvest Christian Academy, Teague also stays busy with the George Teague football camp he puts on every summer in the Dallas/Fort Worth area as well as the George Teague & Friends Foundation, which he started in 1993. Still based in Tuscaloosa, the foundation, previously known as Teague's League before more and more of his ex-Alabama teammates started getting involved, aims to help youth organizations in whatever way possible, be it financially, with volunteers, through mentorships or in providing a speaker. The night before Alabama's annual A-Day game, the foundation traditionally holds a charity basketball game in Tuscaloosa that features Teague and many of his former Alabama teammates.

Teague does his share of public speaking, too.

He said, "My story is about trials and tribulations and how they come up in all of our lives. There's always something getting in the way, some kind of hiccup. Sometimes it's a death in the family,

sometimes you get traded, sometimes you get cut. The key is how we handle those things. Do we get stuck in a rut and do the 'Why me?' deal, or do we get over that speed bump? I went through that and got stuck in a rut and started spiraling backwards for a little while, but you've got to find a way to fight out of it, and there are several ways to do it."

Speaking of a rut, Teague thinks Alabama football is on the way out of the one it's been in.

"I'm excited where we're headed with Nick Saban running our program," he said. "I'm not trying to demean anybody, but I think our players have become a little lax with all the video gaming and DVDs and such. We almost make it too homey for them. Sometimes we need to take some things away and say, 'You're here to play football.' I know Coach Saban is already doing some of that—taking some things away. And that's the way I am. I'm for the old-school type of football where you just go out and beat up on somebody, and I think Coach Saban is going to bring that."

Teague has aspirations of someday coaching at the collegiate level or in the NFL. He and his wife, Consuela, both of whom still have family in their native city of Montgomery, also would like to move back to Alabama at some point, perhaps, he said, once their children graduate and leave home. In addition to 13-year-old James, the Teagues also have a 7-year-old daughter, Jada.

For now, though, Teague is quite content with his duties at Harvest Christian Academy and the fact that it affords him the chance to have quality family time and not work around the clock like he might have to do as a college or pro coach.

"That's the most important thing to me—being able to take care of my wife and kids," he said. "That's why I'm not in such a hurry to move up career-wise. I'm just cherishing these moments before I enter into the 'dumb dad' stage. Right now I'm in the 'cool dad' stage. Whenever we're walking out in public, my kids get a kick out of the fact that other people notice me and know who I am. Seeing that look in their eyes and hearing them say, 'Wow, dad, you're famous,' is a special feeling. It also gives me the chance to talk to them about being humble and respecting all people."

So is there anything about his life that Teague would change if he could? In short, no.

"I'm extremely happy and feel more than blessed," he said. "I got to play major college football at Alabama, won a national championship, got drafted in the first round of the NFL, played nine years of pro ball, I've been married only once and have two kids—a boy and a girl, and I've got the house of my dreams and the car of my dreams. I have nothing to complain about. And I'm 36 and I have a whole lot of life still to live."

Editor's Note: Every college football game has an official record, a play-by-play. Whoever was typing the play-by-play of the 1993 Sugar Bowl wasn't interested in anything beyond the facts, it seems. One of the most famous plays in college football history is described thusly:

2-10 MIA 11 Alabama penalized for offsides

'BAMA SCORECARD

Notebooking Crimson Tide Sports

STUCK ON SABAN

The rumor first appeared on the BamaMag.com website message board. And this particular rumor turned out to be a true story that stemmed from an early season high school baseball trip.

The rumor was that an LSU fan was in Tuscaloosa and stopped by The University of Alabama football complex and left a "prize" on the car of Alabama Coach Nick Saban. That prize was a small LSU bumper sticker.

The story turned out to be pretty much spot-on.

Covington High School's baseball team, from Covington, Louisiana, was in Tuscaloosa where it played Bryant, Tuscaloosa County and Northridge high schools in late February. Covington had practice time at Alabama's Sewell-Thomas Stadium. The Covington team is coached by former Alabama player Jeff Dragg.

According to a person who heard Dragg telling the story, the team was hanging out outside the complex and noticed Saban's car. When the coach later found out the LSU sticker had been placed on Saban's car, he gathered the team together and told them one of them should confess to the mischievous act, but none of the players did so. Then, finally, in light of all the awkwardness, one of the parents who was in town with his baseball-playing son approached Dragg to tell he had put the sticker on Saban's car.

NEXT ISSUE:

The next issue of 'BAMA: Inside The Crimson Tide, will be the football yearbook, published in July. Meanwhile, if you are changing addresses, be sure to call (888) 979-0979 to inform them of your new addresss.

GOOD SELLING

Alabama has an unusual "neutral" site game this fall, the September 29 contest against Florida State in Jacksonville, Florida. Both teams will receive about 33,000 tickets for the game at Alltel Stadium.

In early March, Alabama's athletics department decided to take orders from those who don't have season tickets to Bama games but who might want the opportunity to buy tickets for the FSU game. The plan was to take internet orders for upper deck tickets, which sell for \$45 for this game.

It was a plan that worked almost too well. After just a few hours the Athletics Ticket Office suspended the sale. In less than three hours, The University took orders for more than 7,000 tickets.

This sale will resume after May 1-and then only if tickets remain following sales to season ticket holder groups such as Tide Pride members, UA Faculty/Staff, Lettermen, and UA Students.

The majority of Bama's 33,000 tickets are being reserved for Tide Pride season ticket holders, who may order Florida State tickets on their renewal applications. UA faculty/staff, former lettermen and students will have an opportunity to order their normal road game percentages of tickets on their forthcoming season ticket order blanks.

TAKES A GLANCE

The United States Track and Field Association has selected University of Alabama Men's Track and Field coach Harvey Glance to be an assistant coach for Team USA's 2008 Olympic team. He will coach the sprints and hurdles for Team USA at the Beijing Olympic Games.

Glance, who is a 16-time All-America, three-time Olympic Team qualifier and 1976 gold medal winner, is in his tenth season as the head coach at Alabama. As a head coach Glance has instructed 171 All-Americans, 12 national champions, 75 Southeastern Conference Champions, and six Olympians.

In addition to his Olympic Gold medal, as a competitive sprinter he also won gold medals at the Pan American Games, the World Cup, the Goodwill Games and the World Championships.

Glance was the men's head coach at the 1999 Pan American Games in Winnipeg, Canada, where the U.S. led in total medals won with 295. He also was an assistant sprints/hurdles coach for Team USA at the 2003 World Championships in Paris, France and the assistant sprints/hurdles coach at the 2006 World Junior Championships in Beijing.

In 1996, Glance was inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame and in 2002 he was named one of the Top 100 athletes in the State of Alabama's Greatest Athletes of the 20th Century. He is also number 23 on Sports Illustrated's list of 50 Greatest Sports Figures from the state of Alabama.

In Olympic competition, Team USA track and field athletes have won 317 gold medals and 736 medals overall, by far the most won in any sport by any country. In 2004, track athletes won eight gold and 25 medals total at the Athens Olympic Games, the highest medal tally since the 1992 Olympic Games (30).

FAST FRESHMAN

Alabama's Emmanuel Bor was named the freshman runner of the year by the Southeastern Conference for the 2007 track and field indoor season.

"Emmanuel is a phenomenal athlete," Coach Harvey Glance said. "Not only is he a great athlete he is a great person and has worked very hard for this achievement. He separated himself from the rest of the league and truly deserves this honor."

The freshman from Eldoret, Kenya, has been nothing short of spectacular since arriving at The Capstone. In his first indoor season he qualified for the NCAA Championship, won an SEC championship in the mile run, earned All-SEC with a second place finish at 3,000 meters, and was the anchor leg on the distance relay team that took home third place at the SEC Championships. Bor also finished second in the SEC individual points competition with 19.5 points.

In his first NCAA track and field championship, Bor qualified for the finals and brought home a ninth place finish in the mile. He was the only underclassman to qualify to the finals at the NCAA championships.

Though his first seven months as a member of the Crimson Tide, Bor has been the SEC Freshman Runner of the Year (Indoor), an SEC Champion (mile run- indoor), three time All-SEC, All-South Region (cross country), two time SEC male athlete of the week, and a two time NCAA Championship qualifier.

KING OF THIEVES

Alabama senior centerfielder Emeel Salem erased the oldest career record in the Crimson Tide record book in a victory over Tennessee in mid-March. Salem recorded his 69th career stolen base to become the Crimson Tide's all-time stolen base leader.

Salem broke the previous mark of 68 stolen bases held by David Fowke, who led the Crimson Tide in steals in 1980 and 1981.

Fowke led the SEC with an Alabama record 50 steals in 1981. Fowke also led the Tide with 18 steals in 1980.

"It is nice to have a school record," Salem said. "I am more happy with the win tonight as we opened SEC play. Records are nice, but wins are better."

At the time of the theft, Salem led the SEC with 15 stolen bases in 21 games this season. He also led the SEC with 36 steals last year.

KING OF BREASTSTROKERS

Alabama senior Vlad Polyakov won his second NCAA 200 breaststroke championship in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the University Aquatic Center on the Minnesota campus with a school record of 1:52.71, more than a half second ahead of the rest of the field. He was a mere nine-hundredths of a second off the NCAA record of 1:52.62 set by Texas' Brendan Hansen in 2003.

"Vlad did such a great job out there," Alabama Coach Eric McIlquham said. "He led wire-to-wire. He put some pressure on the other guys in the race in the second 50 and then just put it away. Vlad really just went out there and swam his own race and really controlled it. He was by far the best one out there tonight."

"He's such a great kid, he works so hard and is so dedicated, he really deserves all the good things that come his way."

Stanford sophomore Nate Case was second at 1:53.36 while Alabama senior Hunor Maté was seventh, his first national final, with a time of 1:55.99. Maté, the second fastest 200 breaststroker in Alabama history, shaved more than a second off his career best mark set at last month's Southeastern Conference Championships. Polyakov and Maté both scored in the 100 breaststroke as well, with Polyakov taking third and Maté 11th on Friday.

"Honor had a great race and really stepped up to score some valuable team points," McIlquham said. "It was a great way for him to close out his collegiate career."

Led by Polyakov, Maté and senior Apostolis Tsagkarakis, Alabama's seven NCAA participants scored 91.5 points, good for 14th place. It marks Alabama's 20th top-15 NCAA finish and 30th time to figure among the nation's top-25.

"Our guys came in and competed hard and did what it took to keep us in the top-15," McIlquham said.

This marks the fourth time in his career that Polyakov has finished in the top two of the 200 breaststroke at the NCAA Championships. The Kazakhstan native was second as a freshman in 2003 and as a junior

in 2006. He won his first NCAA title in the same Minnesota pool, setting the pool record at 1:53.93 in 2005. Two years later, he claimed his second title and lowered his own pool mark by more than a second. He is the only swimmer in Tide history to go under 1:53 in the 200 breaststroke.

Polyakov's title is the 11th individual NCAA swimming and diving men's title in Alabama history and the fourth in six years. He is the second Alabama swimmer to repeat as national champion on an event, joining current Tide Assistant Coach Stefan Gherghel who won the 2002 and 2003 NCAA 200 butterfly titles during his competitive career.

Freshman diver Aaron Fleshner took 14th off the platform after scoring 310.20 points in the finals. Fleshner also scored off the three-meter, taking sixth place on Friday.

Alabama picked up a pair of 25th place finishes at different ends of the distance spectrum when senior Apostolis Tsagkarakis was 25th in the 100 freestyle with a 43.59 and sophomore Mark Randall was 25th in the mile with a time of 15:23.95.

Polyakov broke his own school record in 100 breaststroke competition with a 52.25 mark. He had broken the mark first in preliminaries at 52.41, becoming the first man in school history to go under 53 seconds. The third place finish was his best in 100 breaststroke.

After setting a school record in the prelims, the 200 medley relay team of sophomore Chris Perry, Polyakov, freshman Alin Mihalca and senior Tsagkarakis came back in finals posting a 1:27.22 to take 14th place. In prelims, the squad posted a 1:26.73, bettering the old mark of 1:27.15, set by Franck Southon, Polyakov, Tsagkarakis and

Darren Erasmus in 2005.

In the 50 freestyle, after breaking his own school record in the preliminaries, Tsagkarakis, despite being a bit off on his turn in the finals, still turned in a 19.4 to take seventh place, his best career finish at the NCAA Championships. Tsagkarakis shaved more than a tenth of a second off his school record during prelims, turning in a 19.32, making him the fastest swimmer in school history by more than half a second.

"Apostolis was really moving tonight," McIlquham said. "He was right there with the guys who tied for second at the 25 yard mark and just missed his feet a bit on the turn and didn't get good push off the wall. To do that and still go 19.4 really shows something."

Freshman Aaron Fleshner took 23rd off the one-meter board, scoring 291.80. Sophomore Mark Randall finished 40th in the 500 freestyle with a 4:26.92.

The 400 medley relay of sophomore Chris Perry, Polyakov, freshman Alin Mihalca and Tsagkarakis combined to post a 3:12.00 in the finals, taking 15th place. It was the second fastest time in school history, coming hard on the heels of the morning's record setting performance.

"This meet has just gotten so fast," McIlquham said. "Three years ago, 3:12 in this relay put you in the top five."

The squad shattered the school record in the prelims, posting a 3:11.91 largely on the strength of monster legs from Polyakov, who went 51.38 on the breaststroke leg, and Tsagkarakis, who finished things off with a 42.97 on the freestyle leg. Polyakov's relay leg is among the top five in the history of the sport. The previous school record for the 400 medley



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relay was 3:13.02 set by the squad of Franck Southon, Polyakov, J.T. Jones and Tsagkarakis.

WE ARE SIRIUS

The University of Alabama is not a part of a deal between the Southeastern Conference and XM Satellite radio, billed in a press release as a five-year broadcast agreement making XM "the official satellite radio provider of the SEC."

Alabama has been broadcasting sporting events on Sirius Satellite Radio, XM's competitor, and will continue to do so at least through the 2007 football season, according to Crimson Tide Sports Marketing General Manager Michael Alford.

Alabama's contract with Sirius expires after this football season, and CTSMS is in talks with both providers about a future deal.

There is a merger pending between the two satellite radio providers, but it must clear Federal Communication Commission hurdles that could take up to a year, and could be rejected if the merger is deemed to be in violation of anti-trust laws.

SEC schools, and their media rights-holders, are able to negotiate their radio broadcasting rights on an individual school basis and independently from the league office.

XM will have live broadcasts of the Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi State, Ole Miss and Tennessee football, basketball, and other sports starting in fall 2007. South Carolina will join XM in fall 2008, followed by Florida in fall 2009.

In addition to live play-by-play, XM will carry the SEC Football Championship, the SEC Men's Basketball Tournament, the SEC Women's Basketball Championship and other SEC sports. XM will also produce programs throughout the week covering the SEC.

MEDALIST

In the Alabama women's golf team's first tournament of the spring, Crimson Tide senior Jenny Suh showed she was in mid-season form. The All-America had rounds of 70-74-71-217 to tie for first place at one-over-par in the Puerto Rico Classic in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico. It was Suh's fifth career first place finish. The Crimson Tide finished ninth of 16 teams at the Coco Beach Golf Course.

Bama also got a good performance from freshman Rhea Nair. Nair opened her spring season with what Alabama coach Mic Potter called "the best performance of her career," with a 72-72-75 for a final score of 223, which was good for 26th place.

"Rhea had by far her best tournament of her career," Potter said. "She shot a 72 in the second round and showed signs of improvement throughout the weekend."

Suh had her 25th career top-10 performance. The All-SEC player is coming off a fall season that included three top-10 finishes in the five events in which Alabama competed.

"Jenny had a great comeback today after struggling a little bit yesterday," Potter said. "She had a couple of bogeys in the last few holes, otherwise she would have won the tournament outright. It was encouraging to see her play well."

NATIONAL EXPOSURE

Five University of Alabama volleyball players competed at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for a spot on the USA training team.

"Overall, the feeling I get from the five players that went to the tryout was that it was an eye-opening experience for them in several ways," said Alabama Coach Judy Green. "First, they now know that they can compete with the best in the country and second, they came back with a hunger to want to become better volleyball players and make our program better."

Among the nation's best high school and collegiate volleyball players, juniors Crystal Hudson, Bridget Fuentez and Brigitte Slack, along with sophomore Amy Pauly and redshirt freshman Brooks Webster represented Alabama at the tryout.

"I think it was a lot of fun playing with that caliber of player and I think we can bring that enthusiasm and level of play over into team practice," said Slack. "The experience has made us want to make an effort to step up our team's level of play as a whole so we can consistently play at a higher level."

Over the course of three days, the athletes participated in five Olympic caliber training sessions, consisting of drills designed to test one's individual skills and team scrimmages. Players were rated according to their skill level by the USA volleyball staff.

"One of the main things they shared with their teammates when they returned was that the better players are the ones that compete at a higher level more consistently for longer periods of time," stated Green. "That is certainly our number one goal for this spring, to sustain our level of play consistently for longer periods of time. I think they came back hungry to be better. We had the opportunity to send three seniors and I think it is incredible that those seniors are still that hungry to compete and improve. I think it was a well-rounded experience for them."

500 HOMERS

Alabama softball is a relatively young program, and the very successful team headed by Patrick Murphy seems to reach new milestones

of excellence on a regular basis. This year as the then-third ranked Crimson Tide cruised to a 12-0 win over Seton Hall on the first day of the Easton Spring Fling in Tuscaloosa, Bama hit three home runs in the game.

That is not unusual. This year's team is banging out the four-baggers on a regular basis.

But the third homer in that March 2 game gave Alabama 500 in the history of the program.

Jessica Smith came through with the big hit for Alabama in the fourth inning. She came in to the game to pinch hit for Ashley Holcombe with the Tide in front 9-0. Alex Blewitt had reached base in in a pinch hit appearance in her first collegiate game and Mallory Benak came in to pinch hit and recorded an infield single. Smith then came up to the plate and belted a three-run shot over the wall in center field for her first collegiate home run and the 500th in Alabama history.

"It was so exciting," said Smith. "I was shaking in the dugout afterwards. It felt like a shot afterwards but I didn't see it go out. I could tell it went out by the excitement of everybody."

OFF TO THE RACERS

Staci Ramsey, a former standout on the Crimson Tide softball team and current student assistant coach, has signed a one-year contract to play for the Akron Racers of the National Pro Fastpitch league.

"It is a blessing to get this opportunity to play again," said Ramsey. "I am real excited. This doesn't happen everyday so I am going to make the most of it. I want to thank Coach (Patrick) Murphy for helping me out with all of this. He had a huge part in this whole thing. I hope I can make everyone here proud."

Ramsey was named a third team Easton All-American in 2006 following her senior season in which she led Alabama with 11 home runs and 57 RBI. She also batted .304 with 25 runs scored and 13 doubles. For her career she hit .296 with 95 runs scored, 32 home runs and 175 RBI. She is fifth all-time with 229 hits, fourth with 47 doubles and 32 home runs and third with 175 RBI. She was a first team All-South Region choice last year and a three-time All-SEC selection.

"Alyson (Habets), Vann (Stuedeman) and I are so happy for Staci to be able to play at the next level," said Murphy. Habets and Stuedeman are Bama assistant coaches. "She will be an outstanding professional athlete and will do all the right things on and off the field. Akron has signed a winner."

Ramsey and the Racers will open the 2007 season on May 31 when they begin a four-game series with the Philadelphia Force at home. ■

2006-07 ALABAMA SPRING SPORTS SCHEDULES

Baseball

Date	Opponent	*Time	Date	Opponent	*Time
Feb. 9	Georgia State	6:30	April 1	LSU	2:00
Feb. 10	Georgia State	4:00	April 4	UAB @ Hoover	6:30
Feb. 11	Georgia State	2:00	April 6	@ Vanderbilt	7:00
Feb. 14	Troy	6:30	April 7	@ Vanderbilt	4:00
Feb. 16	Canisius	6:30	April 8	@ Vanderbilt	1:30
Feb. 17	Canisius	4:00	April 11	SE Louisiana	6:30
Feb. 18	Canisius	11:00	April 13	Georgia	6:30
Feb. 23	Villanova	6:30	April 14	Georgia	4:00
Feb. 24	Villanova	1:00	April 15	Georgia	2:00
Feb. 25	Villanova	11:00	April 18	South Alabama	6:30
Feb. 28	UAB	3:00	April 20	@ Auburn	6:30
March 2	McNeese State	6:30	April 21	@ Auburn	2:00
March 3	McNeese State	4:00	April 22	@ Auburn	1:00
March 4	McNeese State	2:00	April 25	Samford	6:30
March 6	Southern Miss	6:30	April 27	South Carolina	6:30
	@ Jackson		April 28	South Carolina	4:00
March 7	Tennessee Tech	6:30	April 29	South Carolina	2:00
March 9	Nebraska	6:30	May 4	@ Florida	7:00
March 10	Nebraska	4:00	May 5	@ Florida	4:00
March 11	Nebraska	11:00	May 6	@ Florida	12:30
March 14	@ Samford	6:00	May 11	Arkansas	6:30
March 16	Tennessee	6:30	May 12	Arkansas	4:00
March 17	Tennessee	4:00	May 13	Arkansas	2:00
March 18	Tennessee	2:00	May 17	@ Mississippi State	7:00
March 20	Mississippi Valley	6:30	May 18	@ Mississippi State	7:00
March 21	Mississippi Valley	3:00	May 19	@ Mississippi State	2:00
March 23	@ Ole Miss	6:30	May 24-27	SEC Tournament @ Hoover	
March 24	@ Ole Miss	4:00	June 1-4	NCAA Regionals	
March 25	@ Ole Miss	2:00	June 8-11	NCAA Super Regionals	
March 30	LSU	6:30	June 15-23	College World Series @ Omaha	
March 31	LSU	4:00			

Men's Golf

Date	Event
Feb. 18-20	Mercedes-Benz @ Sawgrass
Feb. 25-27	Puerto Rico Classic
March 17-18	Chris Schenkle @ Statesboro, Ga.
April 9-11	U.S. Collegiate @ Alpharetta, Ga.
April 20-22	SEC @ Sea Island, Ga.
May 13-14	Linger Longer @ Greensboro, Ga.
May 17-18	NCAA Regionals
May 30-June 2	NCAA @ Williamsburg, Va.

Women's Golf

Date	Event
Feb. 23-25	Lady Puerto Rico Classic
March 5-6	@ Central Florida Invitational
March 16-18	@ LSU Cleveland Classic
March 23-25	Liz Murphey @ Athens, Ga.
April 20-22	SEC @ West Point, Miss.
May 10-12	NCAA Regionals
May 22-25	NCAA @ Daytona Beach, Fla.

Softball

Date	Opponent	*Time
Texas State Tournament @ San Marcos		
Feb. 9-11	Oklahoma State, Texas-San Antonio, Texas State	
Bama Bash		
Feb. 16-18	Michigan State, Radford, Toledo	
Crimson Classic		
Feb. 23-25	Indiana State, North Carolina State, Winthrop	
Feb. 28	@ Samford	6:30
Easton Spring Fling		
March 2-4	Louisiana Lafayette, Seton Hall	
March 10	Mississippi State (DH)	1:00
March 11	Mississippi State	1:30
March 14	@ Florida (DH)	5:00
March 17	@ South Carolina (DH)	1:00
March 18	@ South Carolina	1:00
March 21	Arkansas (DH)	5:00
March 24	@ LSU (DH)	1:00
March 25	@ LSU	1:00
March 27	Louisiana Tech (DH)	4:00
March 31	Georgia (DH)	1:00
April 1	Georgia	1:30
April 3	Northwestern St	5:00
April 3	Florida Atlantic	7:00
April 6	Auburn (DH)	5:00
April 7	Auburn	2:00
April 11	Chattanooga (DH)	4:00
April 17	Mercer @ Oxford	6:30
April 21	@ Ole Miss (DH)	1:00
April 22	@ Ole Miss	1:00
April 24	Troy	6:00
April 28	Kentucky (DH)	1:00
April 29	Kentucky	1:30
May 5	@ Tennessee (DH)	1:00
May 6	@ Tennessee	1:00
May 10-12	SEC Tournament @ Auburn	
May 18-20	NCAA Regionals	
May 25-26	NCAA Super Regionals	
May 31-June 6	Women's College World Series @ Oklahoma City	

Women's Track

Date	Event
March 23-25	Alabama Relays
March 30-31	@ Stanford Invitational
April 7	@ Auburn Invitational
April 13-15	Mt. Sac Relays @ Long Beach
April 20-21	@ Vanderbilt Invitational
April 26-28	Drake Relays @ Des Moines
May 10-13	SEC Championships
May 25-26	NCAA Regionals
June 7-10	NCAA @ Sacramento

Men's Track

Date	Event
March 23-25	Alabama Relays
March 30-31	@ Stanford Invitational
April 5-7	@ Texas Relays @ Austin
April 14	@ Arizona State
April 20-21	@ LSU Invitational
April 26-28	Drake Relays @ Des Moines
May 9-10	SEC Championships
May 25-26	NCAA Regionals
June 7-10	NCAA @ Sacramento

Men's Tennis

Date	Opponent	*Time
Jan. 18-27	SEC Indoors @ New Orleans	
Jan. 27	Troy	10:00
Jan. 27	Jacksonville State	3:00
Feb. 4	Virginia	12:00
Feb. 10	Furman	9:00
Feb. 10	Winthrop	5:00
Feb. 16	Clemson	12:00
Feb. 23	@ Princeton	3:00
Feb. 24	@ Columbia	2:00
March 2	@ Vanderbilt	2:00
March 4	@ Kentucky	1:00
March 9	Ole Miss	2:00
March 11	Mississippi State	1:00
March 15-18	Blue-Gray @ Montgomery	
March 23	@ Tennessee	3:00
March 25	Georgia	1:00
March 30	Florida	3:00
April 1	South Carolina	1:00
April 6	@ LSU	2:00
April 8	@ Arkansas	1:00
April 11	Samford	1:00
April 11	UAB	6:00
April 14	@ Auburn	5:00
April 19-22	SEC Tournament @ LSU	

*Central time

Women's Tennis

Date	Opponent	*Time
Jan. 19-21	@ Virginia Invitational	
Jan. 27	Oregon	12:00
	@ Lubbock, Texas	
Jan. 28	@ Texas Tech	10:00
Feb. 3	Colorado	6:00
Feb. 9	Furman	4:00
Feb. 11	Iowa	11:00
Feb. 16	Chattanooga	6:00
Feb. 24	Oklahoma	12:00
March 2	Vanderbilt	4:00
March 4	Kentucky	1:00
March 9	@ Ole Miss	4:00
March 11	@ Mississippi State	1:00
March 14	Washington State	3:00
March 17	@ Michigan	6:00
March 23	Tennessee	4:00
March 25	@ Georgia	1:00
March 30	@ Florida	5:00
April 1	@ South Carolina	1:00
April 6	LSU	4:00
April 8	Arkansas	1:00
April 14	Auburn	12:00
April 19-22	SEC Tournament @ Kentucky	
May 11-13	NCAA Regionals	
May 19-28	NCAA Championships @ Georgia	

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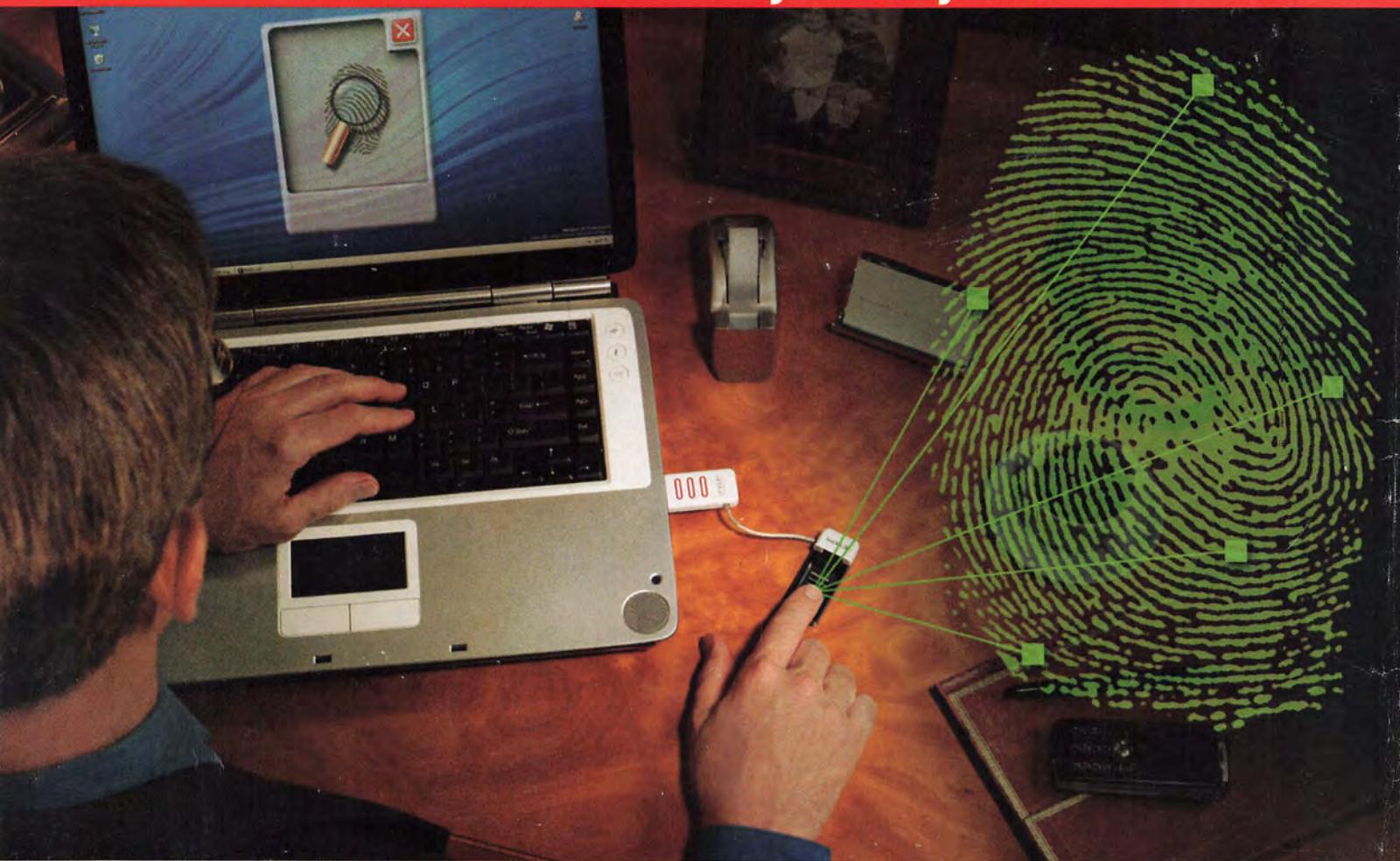
2007 SCHEDULE

Date	Event	Location
1/24/2007	NHL All-Star Game	American Airlines Center (Dallas, TX)
2/4/2007	Super Bowl XLI	Dolphins Stadium (Miami, FL)
2/10/2007	Pro Bowl	Aloha Stadium (Honolulu, HI)
2/16/2007–2/18/2007	NBA All-Star Weekend	Thomas & Mack Center (Las Vegas, NV)
3/31/2007, 4/2/2007	Final Four Tournament	Georgia Dome (Atlanta, GA)
4/2/2007–4/8/2007	Masters Tournament	Augusta National Golf Club (Augusta, GA)
5/5/2007	Kentucky Derby	Churchill Downs (Louisville, KY)
6/10/2007–6/20/2007	NBA Finals	TBA
6/11/2007–6/17/2007	US Open Golf	Oakmont Country Club (Oakmont, PA)
7/8/2007–7/10/2007	MLB All-Star Weekend	AT&T Park (San Francisco, CA)
8/6/2007–8/12/2007	PGA Championship	Southern Hills Country Club (Tulsa, OK)
8/27/2007–9/9/2007	US Open Tennis	Arthur Ashe Stadium (Flushing, NY)
10/23/2007–10/31/2007	World Series	TBA

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